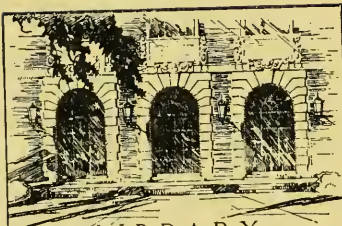


# JOHN MASON PECK

—————



LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS

B

P366d

*Ex Libris*

*Marguerite J. Reese*

ILL. HIST. SURVEY  
ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY









# JOHN MASON PECK

AND

## One Hundred Years of Home Missions

1817—1917

BY

AUSTEN KENNEDY DE BLOIS, D.D., LL. D.

AND

LEMUEL CALL BARNES, D.D.



AMERICAN BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETY

NEW YORK

---

1917

## GENERAL CONTENTS

---

	PAGE
The Prophet of the Prairies.....	5
Harvests of a Hundred Years.....	113
Centennial Data .....	131

## ILLUSTRATIONS

John M. Peck.....	Frontispiece
Peck's Home, Rock Spring, Ill.....	32



B  
P366d

Ill. Hist Survey

## INTRODUCTION

---

THE earliest Home Missions in this country were conducted by individuals, churches and associations.

The undertaking by the denomination in a larger way is marked by three events, (1) the organization of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society in 1802, which carried on work in sixteen States, three Canadian provinces and among various Indian tribes, (2) the sending of John M. Peck and James E. Welch to the West by the Triennial Convention of the whole denomination in 1817, and (3) the organization of the American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1832.

These were not disconnected events, but outstanding features of one vital, intimate, genetic development during thirty years. Not only in time but also in significance the commissioning of Peck stood at the center in the period of the genesis of Home Missions. Hence the centennial of this event deserves careful attention by every one who cares about the coming of the kingdom of God on our continent.

We are particularly happy in having as the new biographer of Peck Dr. de Blois, not only because of his power to make accurate history live and throb like romance, but also because for years he has been in close touch with the life and work of Peck, since while President of Shurtleff College he wrote the story of "The Pioneer School."

In the Appendix of "Centennial Data" will be found a mine of wealth never before worked. Many weeks of toil by a specialist, Arthur Warren Smith, put into the hands of the student great nuggets of fresh fact which may be wrought into the coin of the realm America for Christ.

L. C. BARNES.

19 Mc 2546m

Massachusetts Baptist

4 Mc 254 7.



# The Prophet of the Prairies

== A SKETCH ==

OF THE LIFE AND WORK

— OF —

JOHN MASON PECK

BY

AUSTEN KENNEDY DE BLOIS

## CONTENTS

---

*(See Topical Index on Pages 111 and 112)*

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Early Days .....	9
II. Student Life and Appointment to the West.....	17
III. Laying Foundations .....	24
IV. Pioneering .....	33
V. Trials of Faith.....	42
VI. Methods and Policies.....	52
VII. Awakening the East.....	59
VIII. Creating New Agencies of Power.....	64
IX. The Birth of the Home Mission Society.....	71
X. A Strenuous Career at Full Tide.....	77
XI. Ill Health and an Expanding Field.....	86
XII. Serving the Publication Society.....	93
XIII. Quiet Years—And the End.....	101
XIV. The Man and His Work.....	108

## NOTE

THIS is the Centennial year of our American Baptist home missionary enterprise. In May, 1817, the "Domestic Mission" was inaugurated, under the supervision of the old Triennial Convention. It seemed appropriate, therefore, to present to the denomination at this time an account of the many and varied labors of one of our great missionary pioneers, in their impact upon the expanding life of a new civilization.

In accepting the invitation of the Home Mission Society to prepare such a memorial sketch I have been somewhat embarrassed by the plenitude of the material at my command. A volume might be written upon almost any one of a dozen different phases of constructive activity which grew under the guiding hand and governing mind of that stalwart apostle of righteousness, John Mason Peck.

Besides unpublished manuscripts to which I have had access, I have drawn upon the early files of such denominational journals as "The Baptist Missionary Magazine" and "The Latter Day Luminary." I am chiefly indebted to the Biography, written by Dr. Rufus Babcock, more than fifty years ago. Although quite unattractive in style and singularly inaccurate at times in matters of fact and date, it contains a large body of information, and its extracts from the letters and diaries of Dr. Peck are very interesting. Several of the latter I have introduced into these pages.

AUSTEN KENNEDY DE BLOIS.

THE FIRST CHURCH, BOSTON

*May 25, 1917.*



## CHAPTER I

### *Early Days*

A REPRESENTATIVE gathering of American Baptists assembled at Boston in November, 1845. It was notable for several reasons. It was the last meeting of the Triennial Convention, which for twenty-eight years had conducted the missionary work of the denomination, at home and abroad. It witnessed the founding of the Missionary Union as an independent body. It marked the beginning of the custom of annual sessions of the great national Societies. It was especially noteworthy, however, on account of the presence of two famous men, who represented vast spiritual enterprises. Their vigorous personalities imparted intense interest to the deliberations of the body. The spirit of their labors was familiar to the Baptist churches and people. Their names were honored then, as they are to-day, amongst all Baptists the world over. One had wrought in the Far East, one in the New West, and each with equal effectiveness. One was the foreign missionary pioneer, Adoniram Judson, the other the home missionary pioneer, John Mason Peck. The denomination in all its history has had no more valiant standard bearers than these two men.

The man from the West took his natural place of leadership in the varied business of the occasion. He was a member of the committee which framed the constitution of the Missionary Union. He took active part in the debate on the question of its adoption. He was the chairman of the committee on Missions in India. His personal pledge of one hundred dollars was the first to be made in the long list of subscriptions which resulted in the cancellation of the debt of \$40,000, which had crippled the energies of the foreign mission board. At the period in question Mr. Peck was the Secretary of the Publica-

tion Society, but the greater part of his active life was spent in missionary work in Illinois and adjacent states. There, for nearly forty years, he wrought in the cause of religious, educational, social and civic progress.

John Mason Peck was a son of the soil. He was born at Litchfield, Conn., on the 21st of October, 1789. He belonged to a sturdy farmer-race of plain New England stock. He was the son and only child of Asa Peck, and a member of the sixth generation in lineal descent from Paul Peck, who came to America in 1634 with Martha, his wife. On his father's small farm John M. Peck spent his early years, bearing the brunt of the labor in everyday duties, and enjoying the limited opportunities of a common school of inferior grade during a portion of the winter months. At the age of eighteen, when he himself began teaching, he was a youth of positive personality, clear mind, high purpose and excellent commonsense, but rather startlingly deficient in writing, spelling and the mastery of grammatical forms.

He turned at this time to things of the higher life; and, like so many men whose religious experience has been definite and profound, he could point to the exact time when he became a Christian. It was on the evening of the 15th of December, 1807, that he was impressed by the exhortations at a revival service. He saw himself as "a guilty sinner, deserving God's wrath." After a short period of suffering and distress, he tells us, "my burden became heavier, until the end of the week, when I was delivered, and found a peace of mind and a joy in God which I had never felt before." From that hour until the day of his death he rested his faith in Jesus Christ. Even where difficulties abounded he was seldom vexed by doubts or discouraged by lapses into sin or spiritual apathy.

This vivid experience of conversion opened a new world to his view. He began at once to seek opportunities for Christian service. Holding a lofty ideal of the dignity of the ministerial office and regarding a full and thorough training as a prerequisite to efficiency in that office, he believed at first that his place should



be that of a humble lay helper in the cause of the kingdom. So he continued his tasks as farmer and teacher for several years; and devoted his spare hours to devotional exercises and religious duties. On May 8, 1809, he was married to Miss Sally Paine. His bride was born in 1789 in Greene County, N. Y., but for several years she had been living with her grandparents on their farm in Litchfield. She had recently been converted and both husband and wife became members of the Congregational church. With the birth of their first child the matter of infant baptism was brought home to them in a practical fashion. Should they oblige this unconscious babe to submit to the rite? Was such a procedure justified by Scripture? These and similar serious questions agitated this conscientious young couple considerably. They talked and prayed together concerning the matter. Then they consulted Dr. Lyman Beecher, who sought faithfully to convince their awakened minds, but unavailingly, so the child was never carried to the font.

In the Spring of 1811, Mr. Peck, with his wife and child, removed his residence to Greene County, N. Y., near his wife's early home. He located at Big Hollow Settlement, near the village of Windham. The surroundings were quite primitive. There were fifteen or twenty small clearings on the mountain side and along the valley; but otherwise the country was a dense wilderness of gigantic trees. Big Hollow consisted of eight families, which were scattered over a territory covering a radius of three miles.

The nearest Baptist church worshiped in a schoolhouse at New Durham, on the Batavia Turnpike, seven miles from Mr. Peck's new home. Services were held once a month. Thither he and his wife wended their way, carrying the baby with them, on a beautiful Sabbath in August, 1811. Their journey led them by a winding path over the mountain. They received a hearty welcome. At the next meeting of the church, one month later, they offered themselves for church membership, and, after submitting to quite a rigid examination on points of doctrine, were baptized and received into church-fellowship.

The young farmer was making rapid progress in the matter of religious decisions, for at the very next meeting of the church, in October, he made public statement of the fact that after four years of inner controversy and careful self-examination he was ready to preach the Gospel; and asked the opinion of his new-found friends with reference to the matter. This was given in a vote to permit him to "improve his gift" within the limits of the local church, until the members should be convinced of his call to the ministry, and his qualifications for pastoral service. At their request he preached on the following day, Oct. 13th, his first sermon, from the text: "And he said unto them, go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." So at twenty-two years of age he began that active public ministry which continued for more than forty-six years.

It was always the habit of this man to act energetically. Soon after he had obtained the approval of his church to exercise his gifts, he applied for a regular license to preach, which was granted. Then he accepted a call to the pastorate at Catskill, N. Y., and removed his residence to that place. From the first he combined with his religious activities the care of a school, which he opened and conducted. The school was greatly needed in the community and it also provided him with a means of livelihood. His salary as pastor was an uncertain quantity. It consisted of the collections at the regular services. Mr. Peck preached three times each week, and the sum of the three collections averaged about one dollar. To be exact, at the close of his first year of pastoral work he had received as compensation for his services \$61.95, which included \$18.92 in gifts and special contributions.

It was early in the Spring of 1812 that he began his ministry at Catskill. Before entering upon the full duties of his new and twofold office he had made a walking tour to Litchfield, the home of his boyhood. The distance was 182 miles and he covered the ground in a little more than two weeks, preaching fifteen times *en route*. It was the first of those itinerant jour-

neys which in future years would carry him far and wide to many humble settlements, across the prairies of the West.

His year at Catskill was full of abounding joy. During its course he preached 174 times, and ministered in multiplied ways to the needs of the community. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper were to him then, as always throughout his life, seasons of peculiar solemnity and inspiration. On June 9, 1813, he was ordained. Six months thereafter he accepted a call to the church in Amenia, and so entered upon a sphere of larger influence. He undertook the new and more exacting labors with characteristic enthusiasm.

The young preacher was as greedy for knowledge as for work. During the early months of his new pastorate he gave four hours each day to diligent study under the direction of Principal Barnes of the Dutchess Academy in Poughkeepsie. Here also, as at Catskill, he established and conducted a school. Then a chance meeting changed the current of his life.

Luther Rice was a flame of fire. A man of intense convictions and fervent missionary spirit, he possessed the power of arousing other men to thought and action in the interests of the Kingdom of Christ. He was alive to denominational opportunity in world-wide service. Wherever he went he awakened zeal. He appeared at the Warwick Association in June, 1815, soon after his return from India. Here the young pastor at Amenia heard him speak and was captivated by the spell of his glowing spirit. The two were kindred souls. Peck took him to his own home and their conferences resulted in a decision which affected his whole future career. By this decision Peck was authorized to visit certain associations in central New York to plead the cause of foreign missions.

Apart from the intrinsic importance of the new enterprise, the advocacy of the larger issues of the kingdom was far more congenial to his nature than the narrower duties of the local church. Some men are born to be pastors, some to be teachers, some to be founders and leaders of great undertakings. Mr. Peck had been pastor and teacher; he now sought eagerly the

paths of wide and productive missionary endeavor. He set forth almost immediately on his campaign. During the first journey of three weeks he rode on horseback 440 miles and preached nineteen times, organized several auxiliary missionary societies and talked with everyone he met concerning the big affairs of the kingdom. At the end of the year he resigned his pastorate, and three months later he closed his school.

Plans involving his entire future and vitally affecting the development of our whole Baptist work in America had been maturing in his mind. At first, through his direct association with foreign missions, he dreamed of service in the far East. But his inclusive soul saw readily, and firmly grasped, the conception of the unity of the missionary enterprise at home and abroad, while his conviction of the urgent need of Christianizing the semi-primitive settlements of the new West led him to look longingly in that direction. Indeed, when the first glow of missionary purpose burned in his bosom, he thought of the American West rather than of Oriental lands, although here also it was news from the foreign field which stirred his sympathies for the destitute sections of his own country.

This earliest evidence of strong desire for strictly missionary activity appears in an entry in his diary on June 25, 1813, the very month of his ordination. He says: "Received the last number of the Baptist Missionary Magazine. The missionary accounts from India are very interesting. How many thousands of the poor benighted heathen there are who worship the idol of Juggernaut and adore the river Ganges, but are ignorant of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ! How can Christians in this land of high privileges sit easy and unconcerned, without contributing out of their abundance to spread the gospel in distant pagan lands! My soul is grieved for them in their ignorance. Oh, how I wish I was so circumstanced in life as that I might be able to bear the gospel into some distant pagan lands! where it never yet has shone. A large part of the American continent is also involved in darkness. Yes, under the immediate Government of the United States,

there is an abundant field for missionary labor. How I should rejoice if Providence would open a door for my usefulness and labors in this way!"

Two years and a half later, at the time of his resignation of the church at Amenia, he wrote a letter to Mr. Rice, in which he asked the following crucial questions: "Is it contemplated to form a permanent mission Station in the West? Would it be best to have schools connected with the mission? Is there any place in view for the seat of the mission? What literary attainments would be indispensable for a missionary? Would it be thought necessary for some person to accompany you on your prospective Western tour?" The replies were as clear-cut as the questions. They were in effect as follows: To the first, an emphatic "Yes." To the second, "Yes." To the third, "St. Louis, probably." To the fourth, "A good English education and as much more as possible." To the fifth, "Yes, if the person in question is ready to offer himself as a missionary, and go West *for life*."

Then this good man, Luther Rice, went on to say: "I thank you for the freedom with which you have described your views and impressions relative to personally engaging in the missionary service. It gives me great satisfaction, too, that your views are so much inclined to the West. Not only do I conceive it to be proper that a mission should be established in the West on account of the importance of this region in itself, but indispensably necessary to satisfy the wishes and expectations of pious people in all parts of the United States. So that by no means could I think it best for you to abstain from these reflections; much less that you ought to give them up as vain and hopeless. You have at least shown yourself faithful over a few things, and I cannot but cherish the hope that the Head of the Church designs in his providence and grace to make you ruler over many things."

His ambitions now shaped themselves toward two definite ends; to give his life to missionary work in the West, and to spend a period of time in special preparation for the same. So

toward the end of April, having made provision for the care of his wife and three children during his absence, he journeyed to New York, where he preached in several Baptist pulpits and enjoyed the company and counsel of the pastors, and then on to Philadelphia, to begin his studies. He was at this time twenty-six years of age. He was stalwart of body, vigorous and resourceful of mind, keenly interested in men and things. He had had five year's experience in preaching, and his evangelizing labors had brought him in contact with many of the problems and difficulties of rural church business. Of cities and city life he knew next to nothing. He was a stranger to the refinements of culture. He had no scholastic privileges. But he was a chosen vessel unto the Lord. He had communed with God in quiet places. He was prepared to give his life in full measure for Christ's sake to a needy world.



## CHAPTER II

### *Student Life and Appointment to the West*

**D**R. WILLIAM STAUGHTON was a noteworthy figure in the religious life of his time. He was pastor of the famous Sansom Street Church in Philadelphia, where he preached to several thousand people every Sunday. He was a man of importance in the affairs and activities of the city. He held a foremost place in the councils of the denomination. It was this gifted man who opened a theological seminary in his own house, and became himself its entire faculty of instruction. Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, homiletics and pastoral theology and various other subjects, including even some of the sciences, were carefully studied under his guidance by young men who were looking forward to the ministry.

Mr. Peck had had some correspondence with Dr. Staughton. He had told him the story of his life. He had expressed to him his desire for missionary service in the West. He had stated frankly his lack of the training and attainments which he deemed essential for competent leadership in a large enterprise. He found in the eminent Philadelphia minister a warm-hearted and interested friend. As a result of this correspondence he was now enrolled as a member of Dr. Staughton's school. Five young men including Peck constituted the student group, and all of them boarded in their preceptor's family. One of these, James E. Welch, was destined to be a dear friend and co-laborer during future fruitful years.

A new world had dawned upon the vision of the young man from the mountain settlements. He girded himself for the opportunity. Eye and brain and heart were open and responsive. His education proceeded apace. He remained in Philadelphia for one year; it was a year crowded with impressions, reflections,

disciplines, energies and activities of every helpful sort. Though he studied earnestly he took time to respond to calls from all directions. He preached almost every Sunday, and on some week-evenings as well. During the short summer vacation he made a successful evangelistic tour through parts of New Jersey. He gave missionary addresses also before churches, associations and missionary societies, and aided Mr. Rice in his work as Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, whose headquarters at that time were in Philadelphia. At the home of Dr. Staughton he met many of the most prominent men of the denomination. He visited the Sunday schools of the city, then in the course of their early development, and considered with thoughtful thoroughness their methods and aims. He talked with prisoners in jails and with poor people in the slums. All of these experiences were vitally valuable in the years that followed.

Mr. Peck was never a popular pulpit orator in the usual sense of that phrase. But he had strong and clear-cut convictions, a direct and vigorous manner of speech, and a natural enthusiasm which carried his audience along the current of his thought. There was a ruggedness and virility in his preaching which compelled attention; so incessant calls were made for his services. A soul less staunchly built would have been caught and influenced by these flattering invitations, but he seems never to have felt any temptation to change his plans and settle down as a pastor in the East. His work lay definitely in the regions beyond and his steady eye looked ever toward that goal.

In financial matters he was considerably straitened. After a few months of study his own expenses and the needs of his family pressed hard, so that he feared he would be obliged to take a church for a year or so, or open a school in order to secure the necessary funds. Hearing of his embarrassments some friends who had become interested in his welfare, in New York and Philadelphia, raised in a quiet way a sum of money sufficient for the support of his family until the following summer. Relieved of his worries by this unexpected generosity, he continued his studies with renewed zeal.



He was methodical in his habits, and singularly careful in his use of odd moments for secondary tasks. This economy of time, dominated by his purpose to make all things contribute to one great end, enabled him to do, as through life he always did, the work of several ordinary men. He took short periods of sleep, used moderation in his diet, wasted no precious hours on small talk or profitless discussion, gave no room or place to the spirit of idleness. Many people work out elaborate programmes and time-tables for the regulation of their duties; but few follow them consistently. It is noteworthy that Mr. Peck conscientiously followed the scheme of work which he had outlined for his own guidance.

He thus describes it: "Rise in the morning at 6 o'clock. Engage in private prayer, which I can well do, as my fellow-students will not have risen at that hour. Then spend one hour in studying the Sacred Scriptures, with the assistance of Henry, Gill, Scott, or some other judicious expositor. Commence and continue regular study till breakfast, reviewing the Greek grammar first. After breakfast pursue regular studies of the day, except the hours given to medical lectures. After dinner come the recitations, after which miscellaneous reading and writing till tea-time.

"The evenings—except two each week given to lectures on osteology—to be devoted to studying the classics, to writing, copying, etc., except some times an hour or two given to attending public worship. Then give the closing hour, till half-past ten, to such study of the Scriptures, as occupies the first hour of the morning. Regular daily studies were: Monday and Wednesday, Hebrew and Latin; Tuesday and Thursday, Greek; Friday, natural philosophy, use of the globes, astronomy, etc.; Saturday, composition of sermons, lectures on theology, and systematic reading."

The medical lectures, which Peck and his friend Welch attended, were arranged for through the thoughtfulness of Dr. Staughton, who judged rightly that the knowledge thus gained would be useful to them in their pioneer work. As the year of

study drew toward its close these two young men looked eagerly forward to the meeting of the Triennial Convention, which was to consider the momentous question of the establishment of a Western Mission.

This Convention assembled in Philadelphia in May, 1817. It is known historically as the "First Triennial Meeting of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States." It proved to be one of the most notable gatherings in the entire history of the Baptists in this country. Twelve states were directly represented by delegates; others by proxies. The early sessions were occupied with the report of the Foreign Mission Board. Letters from the British mission at Serampore, and from Judson and Hough in Burma, created much interest. Mr. Peck speaks in his diary of the deep impression made upon his mind by these letters, and goes on to say: "Were it not for some particular circumstances I should think it my duty to devote my life to that region." Then he adds: "The Board made a report in part in which they express the desire that the Western mission be entered upon."

On Saturday, the fourth day of the meeting, the Convention went into committee of the whole to consider the question of altering the constitution of the Board in order to make room for the establishment of a Mission in Western America. The discussion issued in two important conclusions. It was determined first, to incorporate with the foreign field certain portions of the American continent under the name of the "Domestic Mission." It was decided in the second place to direct the Board to raise a fund for the establishment of one or more classical and theological Seminaries to educate missionaries and others. On Monday both of these decisions were confirmed by the Convention in regular session. On Wednesday the body adjourned for three years.

A fine spirit of harmony had prevailed, and the warmth of an enthusiastic devotion had imparted inspiration, yet all things had been done "decently and in order." The conclusions reached were not hastily formed, on the crest of a wave of pious emo-

tionalism. They were the natural outcome, the carefully matured result, of years of thoughtful consideration on the part of a few wise leaders.

The Foreign Mission Board at once began its efforts to carry out in detail the general directions which it had received. Its sessions began immediately after the adjournment of the Convention. For two days the discussion centred about the question: What should be the character and scope of the new Domestic Mission? Conservative counsels for a time prevailed. It was thought better to limit the work to an itinerant mission amongst destitute churches. After two days of debate Peck grew somewhat discouraged. He felt that if such a narrow path were followed it would postpone indefinitely the broad and constructive plan which he had in mind. The next day, however, the decision was made in favor of the more statesmanlike policy. Early on the morning of the third day Peck wrote in his diary: "How solemn the thought that a few hours must decide not only with respect to what I have been pursuing for two years past, but what relates to my whole life in the future."

At ten o'clock, with his friend Welch, he went before the Board. At ten the same evening he writes: "The long agony is over. The Board have accepted Mr. Welch and myself as missionaries of the New Missouri Territory during our and their pleasure; and have appropriated one thousand dollars to defray our expenses in getting to St. Louis and for the support of the Mission. In this I think I see the hand of God most visibly. From this moment I consider myself most sacredly devoted to the Mission. O Lord, may I live and die in the cause!"

On the day following, which was Sunday, May 18, 1817, Peck and Welch were publicly set apart for the work of the Western Mission. The exercises were held in the spacious Sansom Street Church. Dr. Furman preached the sermon of dedication from the suggestive Scripture, "Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them." Then the two young men spoke briefly, telling the story of their call

to missionary service, and their burning desire to be used in all things for the glory of God.

Dr. Baldwin of Boston offered prayer and Dr. Staughton very appropriately extended the hand of Christian fellowship, speaking with tenderness and affection of his interest in his former students and his confidence in the spirit of their consecration. At the close of Dr. Staughton's address all the ministers present went forward and shook hands with the candidates, wishing them God-speed. Then Rev. Jesse Mercer of Georgia addressed them, urging them to "make full proof of their ministry" in abundant service and sacrifice.

This memorable meeting may well be regarded as the formal initiation of Baptist Home Missionary enterprise in America. The splendid work of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society had been confined almost entirely to certain sections of New England and New York. The decision to undertake the evangelization of a vast extent of country 1000 miles west of the Atlantic seaboard was certainly no less important than the sending of men to India and Burma. The future of the Mississippi Valley, the character of its civilization, the quality of its culture and the nature and tone of its entire moral development depended upon the industry and devotion of such men as Peck and Welch. They were destined to become empire builders.

From Philadelphia, Mr. Peck went immediately to New York, and thence to Litchfield, Conn., the home of his father where his family had been residing. The next two months were spent in the midst of a multitude of duties. In the interest of the new Mission he visited Associations, churches and individuals, wrote many letters besides several articles for the Baptist papers, formed auxiliary societies, and sought in every way to spread the holy contagion which had seized his own soul. All the anxious task of direct preparation for the removal of his family to their new and distant home had also to be carried to completion.

Finally all things were ready. On the 28th of July a solemn

service was held in the home of his parents. The last part of the twentieth chapter of Acts was read by their sons, after which the members of this little family circle so soon to be widely separated, knelt together in prayer. Tender farewells were spoken. The mother and father were left once more alone, while the son, with his wife and three little children, turned their faces toward the Far West.

## CHAPTER III

### *Laying Foundations*

ONE may travel to-day from Connecticut to St. Louis in a little more than twenty-four hours, and the journey is made in comfort. A hundred years ago it took Mr. Peck and his family 129 days to make the trip. They left Litchfield in a one-horse wagon on the 26th of July, and after a ten days' drive reached Philadelphia. Here they were hospitably entertained for a week or so, and Mrs. Peck was introduced to many of her husband's friends. They then turned toward the West.

The journey through the State of Pennsylvania and across the Alleghanies occupied nearly a month, and three weeks more were spent in Ohio. On the 23rd of October they re-crossed the Ohio River into Kentucky, where Mr. and Mrs. Welch joined them. Still pushing westward, they crossed the Ohio a third time on the 6th of November and landed on the soil of the Territory of Illinois at Shawneetown. It was late in the evening when the weary little company arrived at "this wretchedly-appearing village," but Mr. Peck took time to write in his journal the same night: "We are now properly on missionary ground, which from its location and destitute state must surely be our field."

Delayed in their onward course by heavy rains and impassable roads the missionaries invited the people of the prairie-settlement to a religious service in the house where they lodged. Mr. Peck preached to the company which assembled, from Acts, 13:26. It was the beginning of his life-long labors for Illinois. There were then only a few Baptists scattered here and there in the sparsely-settled country. After 100 years there are 140,000 Baptist church members within the boundaries of the State.



On account of the serious storms it was decided that Mr. Peck and his family should take passage on a small steamer down the Ohio, and that their friends should pursue their journey by land when weather permitted. Mr. Paine, the brother-in-law of Mr. Peck, who had come to Shawneetown to meet him, and had been waiting for him there for three weeks, agreed to drive his horse and wagon to St. Louis.

The trip from Shawneetown to the Mississippi and then up that river to St. Louis occupied twenty-two days, and cost the family \$25.00 for food and transportation. Slowness of movement was due to wind and rain, the many calls by the way, and the need of caution in navigating the Mississippi, for this was only the third time that a steamer had made its way as far north as St. Louis. During the previous four months two other steamers had succeeded in the perilous enterprise. This seems almost incredible in view of the immense traffic of the later years. While the steamer was moored at Girardeau, Mr. Peck took a long walk on shore and through fatigue and exposure caught a serious cold, which threatened pulmonary trouble. He was brought ashore at St. Louis on the first day of December in a dangerous physical condition. Fortunately Mr. and Mrs. Welch had arrived one week earlier and were on hand to welcome and assist them.

St. Louis was a small river town over-crowded with people. There was no hotel or boarding-house. The only accommodation that could be procured for the sick man was a single room, which had until then been used as an accountant's office. It was narrow quarters. Here he lay seriously ill for two months. With him in the same room, which served for bedroom, kitchen, dining-room and parlor, were his wife and his three small children. For the rental of this miserable place the charge was twelve dollars a month, yet for nine months the family were obliged to live in the midst of this discomfort. The prices for food and clothing were outrageously high, a fact which Mr. Peck records with conscientious regret, since he felt that his responsibility as

a missionary placed him "under sacred obligations to use an economy bordering on parsimony."

The population of St. Louis was composed of three races and two classes. The races were Anglo-American, French and African. The classes cross-sectioned this racial division. One class comprised the professional men, government officials, store-keepers and Indian traders. They were honest and respectable citizens but usually with convivial inclinations, many of them spending their spare time in drinking and gambling. The other class was composed of low and worthless fellows, with no regard for God or man, whose nightly orgies were scenes of drunkenness and indecent revelry. They were blasphemous infidels, one of their favorite occupations being the mockery of Christian institutions by the profane celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the burning of Bibles, accompanied by the shouting of prayers and hymns. Their frequent boast was that "the Sabbath shall never cross the Mississippi," so they made that holy day the occasion of roistering profligacy, and treated with insult and ridicule those who sought quiet or worship.

A part of the French population, chiefly through custom or a lingering respect for tradition, attended morning mass at a Catholic chapel, but these also gave the rest of the Sabbath to merry-making. Dr. Blackburn of Tennessee visited St. Louis in the summer of 1814, and preached the first gospel sermon ever heard in that village. Less than a month before Mr. Peck's arrival the First Presbyterian Church—which was also the first Protestant church—was founded with ten members.

In the midst of an environment of squalor, confusion, vice and infidelity, with here and there a ray of light imparted by a noble Christian life, to illuminate the dense darkness, the missionaries began their labors for Jesus Christ. As soon as his health began to improve Mr. Peck and his co-laborer went to work with a will. The intensity of their zeal burned away many barriers.

At the cost of fourteen dollars a month they rented a room, fourteen by sixteen feet, in the rear of a store, and established



there a school and preaching station. This was the real beginning of definite Baptist enterprise beyond the Mississippi. In February a small church was organized. Their chief lay-helper was a harness-maker, John Jacoby, a man of unwavering integrity and staunch character. Two months later, on the fifth day of April at nine in the morning, two converts were baptized.

An immense crowd gathered on the banks of the majestic Mississippi to witness the administration of the ordinance. It was the first baptism ever seen in St. Louis or its vicinity. Mr. Peck preached from the deck of a vessel to the multitudes on the shore from the text: "When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Two Presbyterian ministers and two Catholic priests were present in the crowd. After the service came the baptism. One of the converts was a colored man who became at once the assistant in the Sunday School and an active worker in the church.

Plans for the erection of a church building were already under way, and soon a sum of nearly \$3,000 had been secured from the more public-spirited men of the community. In June the work of building commenced. Meanwhile the day-school was prospering. Mr. Peck was giving a course of popular lectures, and a Sunday School for the colored people had grown to a membership of about 100. As the months went on, the combined schools were given the dignified title of "Western Mission Academy." It had three departments. The first of these was for paying pupils and comprised in June an enrollment of forty. The second was a free school, limited to ten scholars, most of whom were French Catholics. The third department was the African Sunday School.

Not content with these many and promising activities in the town itself the missionaries pushed out here and there, preaching on Sundays and week days in various destitute settlements. It was on the 20th of June, 1818, that Mr. Peck made his first visit to Illinois, the scene of so many of his future campaigns. He preached on that occasion in the church at Ogle's

Creek in the Badgely Settlement. His next visit took him to various places in Southern Illinois, amongst them Kaskaskia, where a State Government was then being organized. A charter had recently been obtained; since, by hook and crook and devious diplomatic manipulations of facts and figures, the territory had been found to contain 40,000 people. The northern portion of the new State was very sparsely settled; it was considered desert land and uninhabitable.

On his trips to Illinois and Southern Missouri Mr. Peck rode always on horseback. He soon learned to transform his saddle into a study. Travelling for many miles day after day he found that much precious time was wasted; so he conceived the idea of carrying a portion of his library with him. Holding a book open before him he would read voraciously as he made his way onward; and in consequence frequently missed his path while absorbed in his book, and was obliged to retrace his steps.

He entered into informal and hearty fellowship with people of all classes whom he met on the roads, at the inns and everywhere. He himself always talked rapidly and with great animation and emphasis, while he possessed also the gift of extracting all sorts of information from casual acquaintances. He was vibrant with vital energy, and his whole soul was quick with interest in the possibilities and opportunities of the country into which he had come.

Although entirely unpracticed in the higher learning he was from the first a powerful advocate of intellectual training. Wherever he went he made careful enquiry concerning the means which were being adopted to secure educational training for the rising generation. He realized vividly—the vision was ever before him—that the character of the future civilization in this vast region would be determined not so much by the older settlers who should move into it, as by the youth who were then growing up within its borders.

“One object,” he says himself, “never lost sight of in my travels, was to examine into the condition of schools; and I found at least three quarters of all the masters and schools were

public nuisances, and ought to have been indicted by the Grand Jury." At all times Mr. Peck used his influence and urged his wise counsel, in order to substitute well-trained young men from New England for the "whiskey-drinking Irishmen," with a small smattering of ill-digested knowledge, who at that time had almost a monopoly of the school-teaching privileges. It is a noble tribute to his unselfish spirit, and his entire lack of jealous feelings, that he thus constantly advocated the employment of these educated young men, who had had in most cases the advantages of a training greatly superior to his own.

During his first year in the West Mr. Peck made long trips through the frontier settlements. He delighted to come upon the squatters and bear-hunters in their primitive dwellings, and to talk with them about the country, their own experiences, and religion. He associated with Indians, hunters, woodsmen, shopkeepers, surveyors, farmers, and adventurers, listening eagerly to their life stories, and then in his turn telling them in simple and homely words, the great life story of the Gospel. He soon grew familiar with hunger and cold and every discomfort, but he welcomed these necessary conditions of pioneer life. "Eating," he says very cheerfully, "was not so very important; for any man in the vigor of life in those days in this frontier country, who could not go without food for twenty-four hours, and more especially a preacher of the gospel, ought to be sent back where he came from, to the kind care of his friends."

His directions for spending a comfortable night in the open are interesting. He says: "The first thing is to select the right place in some hollow or ravine protected from the wind, and if possible behind some old forest giant which the storms of winter have prostrated. And then, reader, don't build your fire against the tree, for this is the place for your head and shoulders to lie, and around which the smoke and heated air may curl. Then don't be so childish as to lie on the wet or cold frozen earth, without a bed. Gather a quantity of grass, leaves, and small brush, and after you have cleared away the snow, and provided for protection from the wet or cold earth, you may sleep com-

fortably. If you have a piece of jerked venison, and a bit of pone with a cup of water, you may make out a splendid supper, provided you think so, 'for as a man thinketh, so is he.' "

Mr. Peck believed thoroughly in the system of itinerant missionaries or "circuit preaching," as the most direct and practical method of supplying destitute sections with the word of life and strengthening feeble churches. By various means he sought out capable men and had them employed as missionary evangelists.

The preachers and missionaries already in the field were doing excellent work for the most part, though of course in a rather small and limited fashion. They were noble and undaunted, and received voluntary contributions from the people amongst whom they journeyed, for their support. Some of them, not a large group but at times an uncomfortably pugnacious one, were utterly opposed to the introduction of schools and colleges. They were conscious of their own deficiencies, and in presence of trained men of wider view and deeper culture, they felt keenly their own inferiority. Mr. Peck relates the case of one of these ignorant and very narrow-minded ministers in Sagamore County, Illinois, who voted against a resolution to allow any "foreign" missionary to preach in the churches of the association. When requested by a special vote of the body to state the reason for his objection, he replied, in naïve though honest words: "Well, if you must know, Brother Moderator, you know the big trees in the woods overshadow the little ones; and these missionaries will be all great learned men, and the people will go where they preach, and we shall all be put down. That's the objection."

These rather obtuse and obstinate men had a quartette of special hatreds concerning which they raged without ceasing. They were strongly opposed to education, missions, a salaried ministry and Sunday Schools. They preached a crude and cruel theology. The churches which they organized and fostered have dwindled and died. They belonged to the age of religious intolerance. They had no sympathy with the broad-visioned and

progressive movements of nineteenth century evangelism and spiritual world-conquest, which Mr. Peck and other big-hearted missionaries represented, so their numbers and influence steadily declined, and their activities bore no fruitage.

One hundred years is not a lengthy period, when compared with the innumerable centuries of the world's lifetime; yet the last hundred years have seen miraculous changes in the conditions of life in the Middle West of America. The account given by Mr. Peck of his entertainment in the home of a squatter family illustrates this development. The section of country of which he speaks is occupied to-day by refined and progressive people. The town, then a sparsely settled community, has a railroad, daily papers from metropolitan centres, paved streets, electric lights and all the conveniences and luxuries of our brilliant and strenuous latter-day culture. Mr. Peck, on his itinerant mission, rode for many miles through a road of timber over which a tornado had lately passed, crushing all the trees and throwing them in every direction. He slept at night in the open air, on a bed of branches cut from the trees. The next day before sunrise, he mounted his horse, and followed a devious trail over logs and through dense brush-wood.

Bye and bye he found the family he was seeking. They lived in a primitive log-cabin. There was an old man and his wife, two married daughters and their husbands, three or four children and an older son and daughter—a dozen or so, altogether, living by themselves in “the wilderness.” The members of this family circle were quite oblivious to the duties and demands of civilization. None of them could read; they had no use for books or “any such trash.” The young folks looked with undisguised curiosity upon “the preacher.” The entire group were coarse, free and unkempt. Their heads, faces, hands and clothing indicated slothfulness and habitual neglect.

It was about 11 o'clock when breakfast was served. There was no table, chair or any article of furniture in the establishment. A box covered with a cloth which was stained with the marks of much usage in many capacities, served for a table.

Two or three hunting knives lay on the box. The plates were broken or notched. The viands consisted of rancid bacon, half-boiled beans and some buttermilk. According to universal custom the men ate first, the women followed and the youngsters and children made up the rearguard. This was the life and these the habits of hundreds of families that were visited by the pioneer missionary John M. Peck in the year 1818. For many years thereafter similar conditions continued to prevail. Mr. Peck was frequently spoken of by the frontier people as the "foreign missionary." The country was certainly remote enough to be styled foreign, and many of the people were more heathenish than those who dwelt amongst Greenland's icy mountains or on India's coral strand.





**House near Rock Springs, Illinois, built by Peck: First Location of  
Shurtleff College.**





## CHAPTER IV

### *Pioneering*

**D**URING the month of September, 1818, Mr. Peck travelled 400 miles on horseback. In Southeastern Missouri and the adjoining territory of Arkansas there were five scattered, struggling little Baptist churches. They had had the hardihood to come together and form an association. Their annual meeting was held in September, and when that month arrived, in 1818, Mr. Peck set forth to visit them. Through a misunderstanding in regard to the time and place of meeting, he was obliged to make two trips instead of one. The first of these he took early in the month, and it carried him along the Mississippi southerly to Herculaneum, then up the Platin River to Hazel Run, to Big River Settlement, to Murphy's and Cook's Settlements, to Main La Motte, St. Michaels, the settlements on St. François and finally to McCormick's Settlement. He found in Mr. McCormick a congenial spirit. He was an Irishman but also a Methodist, an old settler on the range, and a man of importance in that region of country. He found also a school, and a teacher who delighted his heart.

Mr. McCormick had a large family, and an ambition to give them a good education. He determined to have a "rale teacher," and warned those to whom he applied to send him "none of those whiskey-drinking Irishmen, such as got into our settlement last year, or as sure as I'm a Methodist we'll lynch him." So Mr. Bellknapp, just from Connecticut, was sent, and Mr. Peck expresses the satisfaction he had in visiting this excellent school, and noting what progress the pupils were making. He visited various other schools during the journey, held a conference with a band of Creek Indians, and preached many times in cabins and log school houses.

On his second trip, the latter part of the month, he succeeded in reaching the Bethel Association, and though he arrived on Saturday evening after sunset, and was an entire stranger to the delegates, and excessively fatigued from his long ride, he was prevailed upon to enter the pulpit and preach. "Preach we did," he says, "a missionary discourse, off hand, from Is. 49, 20."

The man from St. Louis had come to the Association with a plan in his head which he and Mr. Welch had concocted, and the following day he proceeded to unfold it. When he was called on to speak upon the subject of missions he presented a copy of the annual report of the Board, and then enlarged at length on the value of missionary work, and the opportunities which were opening for large and successful undertakings by the denomination. He also suggested that the Association through its corresponding secretary enter into correspondence with the Board of Foreign Missions. Then he outlined the plan of a proposed Society to embrace all Baptist churches in Missouri and Illinois which should desire to affiliate with it. He submitted for discussion a carefully prepared Constitution. According to its provisions the objects of the new society were to be twofold, to aid the Western Mission in spreading the gospel and in providing common schools in the western part of America, both amongst the whites and Indians. Any person of good moral character could become a member on payment of an annual fee of five dollars. Each Baptist Association contributing to the work could send two missionaries to the annual meeting.

One of the matters particularly emphasized was the consideration of means whereby prospective school teachers and ministers could be aided in obtaining an education. It was not the purpose of the founders to use any of the funds of the society to pay the salaries of the teachers amongst the white settlers. This would be done by the local communities. But the society was to aid worthy young people to prepare for the ministry or for a profession; and it was also to be on the lookout constantly for good teachers, to import them from the East, if deemed

advisable, and to introduce them to the schools. In other words, it was to combine, in this department of its activity, the functions of a Teachers' Recruiting Station, a Board of Education and a Teachers' Agency.

In spite of the opposition of two visiting preachers from the Boone's Lick Country, who were anti-mission and anti-everything, the Bethel Association voted heartily to endorse the plan embodied in the Constitution which had been submitted. It was formally adopted by the Illionis Association on October 10th, and by the Missouri Association on October 24th. Following its adoption by the latter body the organization of the society was completed; and, under the vigorous leadership of Mr. Peck, it began operation almost immediately. It was the first society of any denomination to be organized west of the Mississippi for philanthropic or missionary purposes.

It is natural for ardent natures to dream dreams. It is easy and fascinating to form plans and to translate them into constitutions and by-laws. This new society was a vision and an ambition. Was it anything more? The provisions already outlined, for instance, with regard to the oversight of teachers and the improvement of educational facilities sound impressive, and rather statesmanlike, but were they workable? Distances were great; facilities for travel were at a minimum; the churches were poor and widely scattered; the preachers were ignorant; the sentiment against schools and education was strong; the people were occupied with the immediate tasks of clearing the land and making a livelihood; all the conditions of life were primitive; immorality was prevalent and religious indifference was almost universal. How was the strong and positive influence of a new educational system to be made effective? It is difficult to say just how it was done; but that it was really accomplished is shown by the facts. Within three years after the formation of the new society more than fifty good schools were established in Missouri and Illinois, where common nuisances, with drunken, illiterate Irish Catholics at their head, had before existed. This seems startling, almost inconceivable, yet the fact stands.

Who can estimate the value to the growing settlements, and to the enlarging life of this great section of our western country, of the change thus wrought in the conduct of the common schools. It was chiefly due to the tireless zeal of the master mind. Mr. Peck had gone to his new field with a single great ideal in his soul: to lay the foundation of a Christian civilization in the midst of rude and unpromising conditions. He brought to his task no subtle charm of person or of manners, no brilliancy of intellect, little tact and no diplomacy, but an indomitable will and a heart wholly consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ and the welfare of his fellow men.

The diaries of this good man, if set in printed form, would seem very monotonous and wearisome to the ordinary reader. They record long horseback tours amongst the churches, innumerable visits and religious conversations, sermons, addresses, the formation of local "auxiliaries" to the new United Society and of "Female Missionary Societies," the strengthening of churches through wise counsel and a contagious vigor of spirit, the settling of ministers, the resolution of church quarrels and difficulties, the investigation of conditions in schools and the urging of better teachers, besides the conduct of an endless correspondence.

The very names "Adventurers" and "Pioneers" cause a thrill of admiration to run through us. It has been popularly supposed that the settlers of a new country are the big, virile, large-visioned young men, who push out from the older communities, and by virtue of their intense spirit and exceptional energy capture new lands, conquer the forest and the wilderness, and mould a nation's destiny. All of this sounds well in poem or romance, but it is not altogether true to fact. Some such strong and victorious personalities play a leading part in the government of every new land; but many of those who emigrate from the old centres of life, and make the beginnings of a new civilization, are the listless ones, the failures, the lawless and degenerate, and the dull plodders whose sole ambition is to get food for the body and shelter from the storm.

It is a hard thing to admit the fact, but it is nevertheless true that great numbers of our "heroic pioneers" and "fearless, big-bodied, big-brained adventurers," were in reality below the normal both in mentality and morality.

The following extract from Mr. Peck's "Journal" brings to our view a discouraging picture, but it indicates the extreme difficulty he had ever before him, in seeking to animate with a lordly and victorious purpose these children of the New West. He is speaking of a tour made in 1818. "On Saturday, November 21st, the St. François church held the monthly meeting in a rough log cabin in the woods. The plan of the 'United Society for the Spread of the Gospel,' was laid before the church. Elder Street had the intelligence, kindness of heart, and Christian spirit, to comprehend the plan, and engage heartily in the work. Not another male member of this body of Christian professors understood or cared about the object. They were stupid, listless, and apparently indifferent to everything.

"The people throughout these extreme frontier settlements were quite ignorant; few could read, and fewer families had Bibles. They knew not the name of a single missionary on earth, and could not comprehend the reasons why money should be raised for the expenses, or why ministers should leave their own neighborhood to preach the gospel to the destitute. They manifested the same apathy in their worldly business. A small corn field and a truck patch was the height of their ambition. Venison, bear meat and hog meat dressed and cooked in the most slovenly and filthy manner, with corn bread baked in form of a pone, and when cold as hard as a bricket, constituted their provisions. Coffee and tea were prohibited articles amongst this class; for had they possessed the articles, not one woman in ten knew how to cook them. Not a school had existed. A kind of half-savage life appeared to be their choice. Doubtless, in a few years, when the land came into market, this class of 'squatters' cleared out for the frontier range in Arkansas."

In the course of his journeys amongst the people of all classes, Mr. Peck had been constantly impressed by the absence



of Bibles and religious literature. To remedy this serious lack he entered into correspondence with the American Bible Society, which resulted in a determination to establish a branch of that organization in St. Louis. This plan had been attempted four years before, but had failed. The effort now was successful. At a public meeting held in the schoolroom on December 9, 1818, Mr. Peck preached from the text: "O, how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day." At the close of the service the Missouri Bible Society was duly organized. Thus a channel was established by means of which a never ceasing stream of Bibles and Testaments flowed out into the great West. Through efficient oversight the new society soon became a source of definite spiritual strength, and its beneficent activities continued with increasing and broadening influence year by year.

Thus far Mr. Peck's tours had taken him to the south and southeast of St. Louis, and across the Great River into southern Illinois. He now explored to the northward. On December 12, 1818, he set out from home, and was gone two months. He first passed up through the river settlements, preaching as he went, in accordance with the schedule of appointments which he had drawn up before leaving St. Louis, and notice of which he had sent ahead. The great event of this pilgrimage was his meeting with old Colonel Daniel Boone, in the "Boone's Lick Country." The Kentucky pioneer and hunter had a room in one of a range of log cabins where his needs were carefully provided for by some relatives. He was ruddy and fair, and exhibited all the simplicity of a child. Mr. Peck had several long interviews with the patriarch, who was enjoying a comfortable and happy old age. He was then more than 80 years old. He spoke feelingly and solemnly of being a creature of Providence, ordained by heaven as a pioneer in the wilderness, a planter of the seed-corn of civilization.

From the Boone settlement Mr. Peck pushed on for fifteen miles along a bridle-path, over hills and through ravines, to his next appointment. The following day he rose before dawn, to meet a preaching engagement twenty miles farther on at 12

o'clock. There was not a single house on the way, and very poor trails, so that he lost his bearings and was obliged to retrace his steps several times. He reached his destination at sunset. To his surprise and great joy he found gathered a little company who had been patiently waiting since noon for his coming. So he preached to them then and there, and afterwards had supper, the first food that he had tasted for more than twenty-four hours.

The next morning he rode fifteen miles to the cabin of Mr. William Coats, after whom Coats' prairie was named. Here a small Baptist church had been formed by Mr. Welch the preceding summer. Prayer-meetings had been kept up regularly during the interim. Mr. Coats had been a Baptist for twenty years in Tennessee. He had moved to Illinois less than two years before, being at that time the only settler in the entire district; but many others had since arrived. Finding in this man a sincere devotion to the cause of Christ, and ability to conduct worship and to speak in public, Mr. Peck talked with him long and earnestly concerning his duty, with the result that he became a preacher of the Gospel.

Continuing his journey to the north and west, after visiting various settlements and preaching whenever and wherever there was a chance, he came into a region where the Indians had been a source of constant trouble. Their onslaughts and depredations had resulted in the murder of many of the settlers, and the country was full of stories of suffering, peril and fighting. In 1814 several companies of rangers had been sent by Congress to protect the people. Quite a number of these mounted rangers were killed in engagements with the Indians, but they had at last obtained the supremacy and brought to pass a condition of peace.

It was here that Mr. Peck first met Lewis Williams. The name of this humble missionary is quite unfamiliar to the Baptists of to-day. It conveys no thought of brilliant deeds or great material success. Yet this man was a man of unusual power. His biography, if it were ever written, would be very brief. It would tell of a young man who went into the wilderness of



Missouri one hundred years ago. According to the account of Mr. Peck he settled on a quarter section of public land. He could hold this for only a limited period unless he should leave the ministry and devote his entire time to the cultivation of his "claim." This he refused to do. He was wholly consecrated to the service of the Master. His faithfulness to Jesus Christ prompted him to go on long and solitary journeys. He preached through all the western settlements, to the extreme and barren frontiers. He had one message, one moving passion; it was Christ himself.

For many years no missionary society aided him. He lived "on the ragged edge" all his life. He was a man of fine and noble nature and he never appealed for help to the people to whom he preached, and for whom he was ready to sacrifice everything, even life itself. No church ever gave him a dollar. Calls came to him, urgent, insistent, from every direction; and he spent himself, unstintingly, in Christ-like fashion, for these destitute people.

In commenting upon the life of this man of God, Mr. Peck says that the early settlers "made the egregious blunder that, because the gospel was 'without money and without price' they might take the times and talents of a minister of Christ for their own use, and rob him of the means of support due to his own family." Lewis Williams was a man of heavenly spirit. It was said of him that God was with him, and scores of sinners were converted under his ministry. He died after a short but severe illness, in 1834.

Mr. Peck was more than a preacher and missionary. He was a wise and capable administrator, and he possessed also a shrewd knowledge of human nature. On his various tours he sought to leave, in every village or settlement where there was interest manifested or any promise of future growth, an organization of some kind, to continue the work, and act as a medium of communication with the outside religious world. In the larger places he formed branch Bible societies affiliated with the parent body. In other localities he established Sunday Schools, linking

these up with the "Philadelphia Sunday and Adult School Union," the progenitor of the American Sunday School Union. The first of these was at Chariton on the Missouri River. It was the first Sunday school in the vast territory west of St. Louis. When it is remembered that the American Sunday school was still in its infancy, the vision and understanding of the pioneer missionary seem all the more remarkable.

He also organized "Female Mite Societies" in many of the small Baptist churches which he visited. Their principal object was to raise money for the United Society which he had formed the year before. All the "mites" were to go toward the payment of the missionaries who travelled and preached in the more destitute regions. These local societies were established with a full set of officers, and held regular meetings. They not only talked about missions and prayed for missionaries, but in the course of time they took up various forms of activity, so that the "Female Mite Society" came to be the most vigorous organization in many a church and many a village. Mr. Peck defines them as "Social organizations for missionary purposes." The first three to be established in Illinois bore the suggestive titles of "The Ogle's Creek Female Mite Society," "Looking-Glass Prairie Female Mite Society" and "Cantine Creek Female Mite Society." It was certainly far-sighted policy thus definitely to enlist the services of the women in the isolated pioneer churches, and organize them for practical effort.

## CHAPTER V

### *Trials of Faith*

THE spring of 1819 found Mr. Peck engaged in the busy task of removing his residence and his family to St. Charles, a village situated some twenty miles northeast of St. Louis. From the moment of his appointment to the western field he had cherished the conviction that the establishment of a school of high grade was a necessity for the successful prosecution of the missionary undertaking. The "Academy" which had been started in St. Louis more than a year before did not meet the need. The exorbitant rentals, the high cost of food, the pressure of alien influences and the evil and depressing character of the environment rendered the plan for a permanent school in St. Louis impracticable. So the choice was made in favor of St. Charles, which was near enough to the larger town to enjoy its advantages, and far enough away to escape its drawbacks. The school at St. Louis was also continued but it furnished only an elementary training in the common English branches.

Rev. James Craig had moved from Ohio to St. Charles a year or two before and had opened an institution of somewhat higher grade than the ordinary district school. This he was willing to hand over to the company of men who should constitute the governing body of the new Seminary and boarding-school which it was proposed to establish. On the 8th of April Mr. Peck took up the work at his new location, while his former colleague continued the various activities which had been set in motion in St. Louis. The new school was named "St. Charles Academy" and was conducted jointly by Peck and Craig. The number of pupils soon increased to forty.

Mr. Peck was a preacher, a traveller, a missionary, an executive; but he disliked the confinement and routine of the

classroom. In speaking of this period in his life, he says: "Attendance in school, domestic affairs, and cultivating a garden kept me busily employed, and in a state of mind that was a poor qualification for a preacher of Christ." And again: "Teaching school is no more a Gospel service than plowing corn."

After a few months the fact became evident that Mr. Craig was a failure, both as a teacher and as a man. He was interesting and affable, so that he won his way with many people; but it was found that he had been guilty of shady transactions in other parts of the country and was thoroughly unreliable. This fact, together with the expense of sustaining the school, and the very limited income from student-fees, wrought havoc with the plans of the principal. His own dislike of classroom routine may also have had a part in the result. The determining factor, however, which led to the closing of the institution, was the radical action of the Missionary Board at Philadelphia. This action involved drastic measures, and put an end to the Western Mission as an organization.

At the meeting of the Triennial Convention in 1820, its first session since the appointment of the two missionaries, their work was abruptly terminated by official decree. The reasons given were three in number; the lack of ample funds for the prosecution of the work, the expectation that the whole of the Mississippi Valley would soon be supplied with plenty of religion by the immigration of preachers from the Middle and Eastern States, and the opposition in the West to the method followed by the missionaries. These reasons, or excuses, were all superficial and unreasonable.

The pages of the "Baptist Missionary Magazine," and other records and reports, show that the Board in Philadelphia was intensely interested in the development of the foreign missionary work in Burma and in the founding of Columbian College in Washington, D. C. Between these two fascinating interests the Western Mission fell to the ground. In the Magazine, during 1819 and 1820 there appear 97 articles concerning foreign missions and letters from foreign missionaries. Ardent appeals are

made for work in Russia, Jerusalem and the Sandwich Islands. This was all very romantic and certainly very creditable. But, although the Magazine claimed to be equally interested in missions everywhere, the limit of vision for this continent seems to have been the Ohio River. Four articles concerning the Western Indians appear, also three letters from Mr. Peck and two from Mr. Welch, and that is all.

The statement that funds were lacking was no doubt true. No active and vigorous campaign for funds had been carried on or even commenced. The assertion that ministers were moving into the West was startlingly false. Only one Baptist preacher had emigrated to Missouri, within one hundred miles from St. Louis, in two years; and not more than two or three into Illinois. Great multitudes of people were turning toward that new land, alarmingly destitute of every vestige of religious life or character, but the preachers were not among them. The third reason given, that there was "opposition" to the missionaries, sprang from the fact that they had settled in St. Louis and established a church and a school there, instead of plunging into the wilderness and converting the Indians.

Again and again the two principal leaders of the work had sought to show the Board that however important the task of teaching the Indians might be, the necessity of establishing a strong religious purpose amongst the white settlers, the makers and moulders of the life of the future, was infinitely more urgent. It was all of no avail. St. Louis was not far enough away from Philadelphia to appeal to the imagination, as India and Burma did. It was not near enough to be made the subject of personal investigation on the part of members of the Board, as was done in the case of destitute sections in Maine and Virginia.

The Board failed utterly to visualize the deplorable need and the limitless opportunity in the rapidly growing sections of the New West.

That the missionaries were to be censured for settling in St. Louis seems ridiculously unfair, when we consider the incessant efforts made by them through the use of every possible



agency of helpfulness, to reach the vast region lying within a radius of one hundred miles of St. Louis in every direction. Their long missionary tours, their exhausting labors, their organization of churches and Sunday Schools, their cheerful endurance of all the hardships of frontier life, constitute a tremendous answer to the implication that they were living an easy pastoral life in the town. It is a curious fact that while some critics were complaining because they stayed in St. Louis when they should have gone out amongst the Indians, others complained that they neglected the vital needs at the centre and spent all their time in pioneering through the settlements.

When news of the action of the Board reached Mr. Peck he was lying at the point of death, ill with billious fever in almost a malignant form. He recovered slowly, but it was long before full health returned. The death of his brother-in-law, Mr. Paine, to whom he was deeply attached, occurred at this time. His two young children were seriously ill; and, the greatest affliction of all, his eldest son, in whom were centered many fond hopes, was smitten with sickness and died. Thus, with no money, with heavy financial burdens, weak and ailing, stricken and in great sorrow of heart, his position taken from him with cruel suddenness, his school a failure and the mission which he loved better than his life closed and abandoned, his situation was desperate in the extreme.

The Board had desired him to proceed to Fort Wayne, about 350 miles northeastward, and to cooperate with Rev. William McCoy in his labors amongst the Indians. Mr. Welch was asked to continue his ministry in St. Louis and without aid of any sort from the Board. This he could not do. He had already given to the work all that he possessed, including a small personal patrimony. He was called away by urgent family duties, although he always retained a deep interest in the church at St. Louis, and rendered it substantial assistance in the years that followed. For Mr. Peck to undertake the journey to Fort Wayne without means of any kind and with no promise of aid from the Board in the long journey, was as impossible as a trip

to the moon. Besides his whole soul was enlisted in the progress of the Kingdom of Christ in the frontier field. As we consider today the methods used at that time by the Philadelphia Board, it seems strange that Christian men could have been guilty of such cold-blooded and short-sighted policies. Our unbusinesslike Baptist methods are very often bungling, but they are seldom so brutal.

The letter of Mr. Peck, replying to the terse order of the Board, though written in the midst of soul-scorching trial and affliction, is a model of Christian courtesy and great-souled devotion to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. He pictures in a few simple words the extreme need in the western field, indicates the inflexibility of his purpose to remain there at his own charges, and affirms his conviction that Providence commands him to "Stay where you are!" It is characteristic of this good man that he should have no anger, no resentment, at the treatment which he had received, but should continue in cordial and sympathetic relations with the cause of world-wide missions and with the stupid eastern Board.

A crucial period in his life had now arrived. It is impossible for us to realize how serious was the problem that he faced. The closing of the schools in St. Louis and St. Charles, from which he had hoped so much; the departure of his beloved colleague, Mr. Welch; the breaking of all official ties with the East; the burden of illness and affliction; and the acute financial situation in which he was placed, made a complexus of difficulties which seemed insurmountable. Perhaps few men, so great and good as this man, have ever been so enmeshed with troubles and entangling devices of every sort. Yet he fought his way bravely on.

It must not for one moment be supposed that the Board in Philadelphia had been large-hearted or liberal in their support of the Western Mission. They never were. Their communications had been brief and far between. Their remittances of salary had been painfully irregular. Sometimes the hard-working missionaries had gone on with their labors for many months



without answers to their letters or supplies for their wants. Methods that among men of the world would be impossible, and are to us today incredible, were practiced. It is a blot upon the splendid record of our Baptist missionary enterprise. Nevertheless, grudging doles of money had been received from time to time, and had been used with infinite care and economy. Now even these ceased.

Through the agency of persistent anti-mission preachers some of the churches in the Missouri and Illinois regions had been influenced to withdraw their gifts from the Mission. Mr. Peck had prevailed upon a large number of the small and scattered churches to donate a percentage of their contributions to the support of the pioneer travelling preachers who were quite numerous in that section of the country. Although this policy had greatly assisted these men, they were animated in many cases by the spirit of jealousy, and turned against the hand that had helped them.

For a year or so Mr. Peck struggled and sacrificed and prayed. He continued his journeys amongst the feeble churches of the region, supported by faith and the voluntary offerings of the people amongst whom he labored. Then, early in 1822, he was formally appointed a missionary of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society. The remuneration was pitifully small; he was guaranteed the amount of five dollars per week for the time actually spent in the field, and he was expected to raise his own salary, if possible. His journal indicates that he was greatly cheered by this new arrangement. It linked his labors very definitely with an organization which had conducted missionary operations with success for more than twenty years. It gave the lonely man new courage for his work.

In April, 1822, he took up his residence at Rock Spring, Illinois, and this remained for the balance of his life the headquarters of his missionary operations. From a secular point of view the outlook was not encouraging. He obtained only a half section of land, and that was chiefly forest and stubble. There were no buildings, so with the aid of kindly folk in the vicinity,

he erected a house and outbuildings. This toil and care occupied several months, which he begrudged, because of his desire to be engaged in large and spiritual enterprises.

Yet he was not by any means idle in the affairs of the kingdom. A company of people, the most of whom were Baptists, had recently come from Georgia to Illinois. They had taken up their residence on farms in the vicinity of Rock Spring. They missed the religious experiences of their former life. In their far away Georgia home they had been parishioners of the Rev. Jesse Mercer, saint and educator, the founder of Mercer University. They expressed a strong desire to be organized into a church. So through the leadership of Mr. Peck they were thus constituted, the service being held in his own house. It gave him great encouragement to be brought thus early in the history of his new relations into fellowship with this body of earnest Christian people.

The aspirations of his heart, however, were always in the wider field. No sooner had he settled his family comfortably in their new abode, and provided for them through the cultivation of the land, than he mounted his horse and started forth on one of his long and productive journeys. This took him to the eastward. He visited various churches and associations, and met the famous (or infamous) Daniel Parker, politician, theologian, reactionary and propagandist. This shrewd and able man embodied the whole devilish spirit of the anti-mission crusade. He had a smooth tongue, considerable eloquence, and a genius for persistent proselytism.

In the light of present-day world-wide ideas it is hardly possible to understand the bitter opposition to all the higher forms of Christian service which characterized the people of the smaller churches in the New West one hundred years ago. At the Association in New Princeton, Indiana, Mr. Peck was refused a seat in the body and treated as an outcast, because of his zeal in missionary enterprises. Mr. Parker, on the other hand, was welcomed joyously, and applauded in his rabid opposition to every form of missionary activity. Mr. Peck, great-

hearted and noble, says in his diary: "In my interview with Brother Parker I alluded to his address about missions, and told him I could cheerfully give him my hand, as a conscientious and well-meaning though greatly mistaken brother."

Describing the later sessions of the Association he says: "The subject of missions came up. This was occasioned by one church having charged another with having supported missions." This constituted a serious grievance. Mr. Parker arose and delivered a fiery address, denouncing all missionary effort in lurid and forceful terms. Mr. Peck obtained leave to speak and defended the missionary enterprises of the denomination with great fervor. It was a memorable occasion. Two of the most noteworthy leaders of religious thought and feeling that the 19th century produced were present, face to face, at the meeting of a few humble and insignificant churches. They spoke mightily, the discussion lasting for five hours. Mr. Peck must have appreciated the vigor of his antagonist, for he says: "I have never before met with so determined an opposer to missions in every aspect." But the virile and eloquent Parker, State Senator, splendid man of affairs, religious leader, founder of a sect and stalwart reactionary in all that concerned the kingdom of Christ, received a startling rebuff; for the very Association which had declined to recognize the missionary and had refused him a seat in its assembly three days before, voted heartily to sustain the cause of missions, and resolved, by formal vote, to support the church which had raised a contribution for the great cause.

In connection with this short trip which was one of very many, the dauntless Pioneer notices these facts: "I have been absent from home twenty days; have rode 456 miles, have preached twenty-five times, visited many families and settlements, and gained much information in regard to the destitution of this part of our country, the great need of missionaries and the promising fields which are ripening." After a brief stay with his family at Rock Spring, he started forth on a tour through Missouri from which he returned to find his wife and two of his children dangerously ill. It was the greatest cross

that he had to bear, and he deplores the fact again and again in his journals, that the character of his far-flung labors took him away from his family so frequently and sometimes for periods of two or three months together.

As soon as the sick ones had recovered he set out once more on his pioneering journeys, attending the annual meeting of the Illinois Association, visiting the St. Louis church and then proceeding into the interior of Missouri. The record of the next few years is one of constant and indefatigable labors. He was laying foundations of righteousness for future generations. He was seeking to mould the heart and conscience of a new nation. His salary was a wretched pittance. No man was sent to aid him. His whole being was thrilled with a conviction of the supreme importance of the work in which he was engaged. So, sparing himself in nothing, he wrought by day and by night in the Master's service. Since Mr. Welch's departure he had been entirely alone in the leadership of Baptist missionary undertakings; and in addition to the immense field which he sought to cover and cultivate, the care of the church in St. Louis, and of that which had recently been organized at Rock Spring, devolved upon him.

The spirit which animated the man is reflected in an incident related by Dr. Rufus Babcock in his account of the life of Dr. Peck. He lost his horse, with clothes, valuable papers and journals and never recovered them; but he did not lose his temper. "He was passing through a comparatively unsettled portion of the country, and had occasion to dismount, when his horse took sudden fright at himself or at some other object, and ran very rapidly away through the bushes and woods out of reach and out of sight directly. He followed in pursuit all that afternoon, and at night came to a log-cabin upon the spot where the town of Manchester now is, in Morgan county. He was there made welcome and entertained for the night. The friend in whose cabin he took refuge was afterwards Hon. Judge Marks, of uncommon powers of discernment, who became much inter-

ested in his guest from the first, and regarded him with life-lasting affection.

"In the morning the horse-hunt was renewed with all the help which could be mustered, but it was unsuccessful. Then as jovially as though this had been the very object of his visit, he joined the boys in picking up some fine large nuts, as they returned; and in the evening he was found seated flat on the broad hearth-stones of the cabin, as one with the boys, cracking and eating nuts, and entertaining the wondering family with lively anecdotes one after another, of which he seemed to them to have a marvelous supply. This kind of buoyancy of spirit and versatility of powers gave him immense influence among the people wherever his lot was cast."

His ability easily to adapt himself to people of all conditions and all ages was one of the secrets of the great influence which he soon came to possess throughout the entire western country.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Methods and Policies*

IN all his efforts to evangelize the communities which he visited "The Pioneer," as he came to be called, used four chief agencies; these were sermons, Bibles, Sunday-schools and personal conversations. The fact that he founded the Missouri Bible Society in 1818 has already been noted. In April 1824 he founded in Illinois the Green County Sunday School Association. The significance of this action is seen when we remember that the American Sunday School Union was not organized until 1825, and that few if any groups of schools had been brought together in associations prior to that time. His genius for organization and his statesmanlike view of things led him thus to anticipate the needs of the future. Speaking of this new Society in Green Co. he says in his journal: "It is my intention to form a number of county societies and then concentrate their efforts in a general union of Sabbath-schools."

It was his habit to take with him on his journeys as many Bibles, Testaments, tracts and pamphlets as his horse could carry comfortably. The Bibles he sold, the tracts he distributed without charge. In every favorable location he organized a Bible society, left a number of Bibles and other literature at the home of the newly-elected secretary, and explained how more could be obtained as needed from the depository in St. Louis. When a Sunday-school was formed in a place he introduced the Bible as the text-book for the classes, and linked up its work with that of the local Bible society. There was nothing slipshod about his methods. In organizing a new society or Sunday-school he gave to the occasion due impressiveness, believing that a good start was half the battle. He would announce the proposed plan and the date of organization well in advance, and give wide



circulation to this announcement. Frequently he wrote personal letters to men prominent in the community and the country surrounding it, inviting their presence. By such measures he stimulated interest beforehand and secured the success of the movement. As he correlated his Sunday-school and Bible agency activities, so he supplemented his preaching with personal evangelism.

In writing to the Massachusetts Society, before the end of his first year's work under its direction, he closes his report with the words: "I have endeavored to seize every favorable opportunity of introducing religious instruction into the family circle, a course which if judiciously pursued, may be rendered of incalculable benefit and sometimes prove efficacious when public preaching would produce little effect."

The more carefully Mr. Peck's methods and policies are studied the more they reveal their thoroughly modern and practical character. For instance, he heartily discountenanced the emphasis of evangelistic work to the neglect of teaching and training agencies. Simply to make fervid appeals, win converts, gather them into the churches and hurry on to execute a similar programme at the next stopping-place, was wholly alien to his scheme of things. He states his views succinctly in one of his letters, dated Nov. 1, 1824, to the Massachusetts Board, thus: "I am deeply impressed with the idea that every mission, whether foreign or domestic, should be pursued upon the principle of making every part of the world Christianize itself. On this principle it has been my object to call into action and improve all the gifts and talents around me, some in the Bible cause, some in Sabbath school instruction and others as itinerant preachers."

Had all our missionaries at home and abroad seen clearly the common-sense wisdom of the theory thus advocated, the outposts of the Kingdom would be far more vigorous and their influence vastly greater than they are today. Multitudes of mission churches and interests, in all parts of the world, have been dragged unsteadily along, clinging to the skirts of the



parent Boards, when they should long before have been independent and self-sustaining, planning and pushing their own activities, and living their own strong life.

Too many solicitous and kindly mission bodies, especially under our loose Baptist system of government, have only recently awakened to the necessities of the case. They have found themselves lacking in real effectiveness on many a far-off field. They can count hosts of feeble and dependent converts; but they fail to breed productiveness and power. While they were following the easier paths, other Societies were acting upon the principle so clearly stated and so indefatigably practiced by the Pioneer of the prairies one hundred years ago. Their mistake has been that they failed, in the earlier years, to teach and to train, to compel the elements that foster strength, to shape the human material toward firmness of character, self-reliance and self-support. The permanent quality which inhered in almost all of Mr. Peck's work was due to his keen sense of values, his attention to the fundamentals and his prophetic vision. It was as though he had read the record of the unborn years, and knew the need the future would create.

It must not be imagined, however, that he was an organizer and educator rather than an evangelist. He was certainly no revivalist, as that term is commonly understood; yet the burning desire of his heart and the constant endeavor of his preaching and conversation, were to bring men and women into vital fellowship with Jesus Christ. The type of evangelism of which he was suspicious was that common enough in some of the frontier communities, which is described in the following account of a camp-meeting which he visited in Missouri:

"At evening of the last day I heard a young Cumberland Presbyterian attempt to preach from I Peter i, 8. He was a young hand and made out but poorly. A Mr. Chamberlain, a Methodist, gave an exhortation, in which he began by lamenting the want of effort on the part of the people declaring that he had no faith to exhort; he reproved the people for sloth and neglect, but soon fell into a strain of the most passionate, powerful

appeals to the hopes and fears of all around him. The Methodists were alternately assailed and encouraged, till he wound up by proposing to all who ever did pray, or ever would pray, to engage ten minutes by the watch as the last alternative. Upon this the members and others rushed forward to the stand, and all commenced as if with one voice. Soon a black woman and others commenced shouting. Two or three appeared in agony for mercy. The preachers would exhort them to have a little more faith, "to struggle a few minutes longer, and God, Christ and heaven are yours!" They would constantly make appeals to those engaged to prevent the fervor and zeal from expiring. I left them about nine o'clock still engaged and I could hear them shouting at a great distance."

He adds in his memoranda various notes and comments, amongst them these:

"All this excitement and effect, so far as visible, might have been produced without the agency of God, and might be and seemed to be only the effect of human causes. While from the fruits occasionally manifested, I have no doubt that genuine convictions and saving conversions do sometimes follow such confused and disorderly meetings, yet it must be confessed that most of these cases prove false—worse than worthless.

"The method of talking to and exhorting the persons apparently under conviction is highly improper and injudicious. The whole object of the preachers and leaders appears to be to get them relieved from distress, quite irrespective of the character of the relief. Hence, were it not for the apparent necessity for such meetings, in a thinly populated country, and the fact that sometimes God blesses very imperfect means, I would disapprove of them wholly. As they are congenial to the habits of the people, and may do some good, reaching those not otherwise accessible, they may be tolerated, and as far as practicable regulated."

These comments indicate the writer's largeness of view. His analysis of the revival phenomena, judged by the tests

which are made in our days by students of the psychology of religion, is accurate and illuminating. Further than this, the occasion which prompted these entries in his journal reveals their author's catholicity of spirit. He was attending a camp-meeting conducted by Methodists and Cumberland Presbyterians. He was himself a staunch Baptist, yet throughout his long period of active service there is never a trace of narrowness or bigotry in his attitude toward other denominations. He visited Methodist Camp-Meetings, Presbyterian Conferences, and all other religious gatherings of any creed or persuasion that came in his way, and praises with hearty enthusiasm an Episcopalian clergyman to whom he listened on a certain occasion: "For sound reasoning, solid eloquence and brilliancy of thought, I have never heard his address surpassed." He organized the Missouri Bible Society as an interdenominational body and the many local branches were all of the same character. There was nothing small or sectarian in his attitude. He wrought primarily for the progress of the Kingdom, the Faith and the spread of the Truth.

He organized Sunday schools rather than churches. Nothing could have been more far-sighted. The directions given him from the East had bidden him gather together into churches any scattered Baptist members whom he might find, but had said not a word about Sunday schools. He obeyed the directions; he organized many churches; but looking forward he realized the crucial importance of reaching the children and youth, of guiding their minds in the way of Christ and of shaping their characters according to the teaching of Holy Writ.

As one reads the account of the manifold labors and constant journeying of this pioneer missionary, the predominant impression is never that of routine business faithfully performed but always that of growing knowledge and an ever firmer grasp of elemental motives and constructive principles of action. One of the ablest of our missionary statesmen in China recently expressed the secret of his quenchless enthusiasm in these words: "We are helping to build a new and mighty

nation; China is one of the great world-nations of to-morrow." This same prophetic inspiration, for it can be accurately described in such terms, was the mighty force in the ceaseless activities of our Baptist Pioneer.

As the boundaries of civilization were extended, as the immigrant pushed up into Central Illinois and the frontier moved westward in Missouri, this far-seeing man enlarged the field of his efforts, and the scope of his ministry. On the 28th day of September, 1824, he reached the outposts of civilization, on the borders of what is now the State of Kansas. He writes in his journal:

"I am now at Liberty, Clay county, on the extreme western side of Missouri river. Southeast lies the missionary station of Harmony, among the Osages, one hundred miles distant. Northwest are the Council Bluffs, and before me the interminable wilderness, over which the savage Indians roam after the buffalo. Could I but succeed in planting the Bible here, it would greatly rejoice my heart, but prospects at present are not very favorable. The settlement of this remote country in the extremity of the State was begun but four years since, and it now contains about two thousand inhabitants.

"The people who have settled this district are chiefly from Kentucky and Tennessee, sadly destitute of public spirit, and manifest a great degree of apathy towards benevolent institutions, even when they are obviously intended for their own benefit. More than one hundred of these families are believed to be entirely destitute of the Scriptures, yet when I explained—after preaching—the design of an auxiliary Bible society, the need and the benefits of it, and then urged its formation, no one stepped forward and offered to engage in it."

That this tour was not lacking in definite results, however, is manifested from his statement at its close, that he "rode on horseback 830 miles, preached 27 times, regular discourses, founded five branch Bible Societies, attended four Baptist Associations, two Methodist Camp-meetings, besides making a

number of addresses and preparing the way for other Bible societies hereafter. This has occupied 45 days." This was one of his less successful trips, yet what a record for a month and a half! And much of the time was consumed in slow riding over rough forest roads, a fearful waste of energy and hours according to our modern railway and automobile standards.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Awakening the East*

IMPORTANT political and social questions were now beginning to agitate the minds of the people. Public-welfare movements were being inaugurated. Into the discussion of all these Mr. Peck entered with vital vigor. He became an agent of the Colonization Society, a mighty advocate of temperance, a student of the intricate problems of immigration, a stout opponent of the effort to make Illinois a slave state. There was one subject, however, which underlay all others, and which tended to shape and determine their character. It was that of education, better education, higher education. During his years in the West he had used his influence unceasingly in establishing local schools and importing competent teachers. Much more needed to be done.

In 1826 there was not a single institution west of the Ohio River, with a standard in advance of that of the ordinary district school. His own schools at St. Louis and St. Charles might have been made abundantly successful had the men in the East shown any practical sympathy for these enterprises. He now determined to visit the Eastern States. He had two motives in view, to impart to others his own zeal for the evangelization of the western country, and to explain and enforce the necessity for a trained ministry and an educated citizenship.

He undertook the long journey in the winter season, leaving Rock Spring on Feb. 22nd and travelling on horse-back through mud and rain to Cincinnati, which he reached at the end of three weeks. It was a joy to the pioneer preacher, after enduring the struggles and trials of the wilderness for so many years, to get back to normal conditions of living. He was welcomed in hospitable Christian homes. He felt the thrill of



Christian fellowship. He preached to a congregation larger than any he had spoken to, or even seen, for nearly three years. He arrived in Washington about the first of April. There he spent two busy and delightful weeks, attending the sessions of Congress, meeting President John Quincy Adams, studying the affairs of the newly-founded Columbian College, preaching in the college chapel as well as in the city. He met two dear friends of former years, Dr. Staughton, his teacher and counsellor, who had become a pastor in Washington, and Luther Rice, whose zeal for missions had first kindled the flame in his own heart.

In Philadelphia he was royally entertained by many old friends, and by some whom he met now for the first time, amongst them Alexander Henry, president of the American Sunday School Union, whose agent he had been for some years. In New York he attended the Triennial Convention, speaking on several occasions and preaching on both Sundays during the session. He was present also at the annual meetings of the American Bible Society, the Tract Society, the Home Mission Society, and the Colonization Society. These May anniversaries represented large interdenominational interests; and they called forth his intense interest and admiration. The Bible Society, in view of his valuable services to that organization, made him an honorary life-member.

From New York he drove to Litchfield. "I drew near to the hills and prospects upon which a thousand times I had gazed in childhood—my native town. How many pleasing and painful associations rush into the mind on returning to one's native home after an absence of years! Changes have occurred, a new generation has started up, the old people have mostly vanished from the earth; but the hills and valleys, the rocks and rills remain unchanged." His father was long since dead; his mother had married again and again been widowed. He writes that though age had silvered her locks her heart remained unchilled. He spent a few days with her, and amongst old neighbors and friends, and then continued his journey.



He reached Boston in time to attend the annual gathering of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society, whose representative he had been for four years. He spoke with tremendous earnestness at one of the public meetings, and at a session of the Trustees laid before them a plan of operations for future work in the West. This was adopted and he was authorized to secure funds for its administration, and then to put it in force, It involved a system of circuit-preaching, by which preachers were to tour the western states, one hundred dollars per annum to be paid them by the Board, and the remainder of their salary to be raised by them on the field. The plan included also the appointment of an efficient man to take the pastorate of the church in St. Louis, and to develop a school, the income from which would be expected to cover half of his salary.

The third item in the plan proposed the establishment of a theological School, to be located in Illinois, where young men might be trained and equipped for the work of the Gospel ministry. "Such a school," he says, "has been an object in my mind for years, as a very necessary part of the system of measures which I have attempted to carry forward; but I have never seen the time to accomplish it until now . . . I cannot bear that our preachers in Illinois and Missouri should continue as ignorant as some of them now are. In the three states are not less than 250 Baptist preachers. A majority of them have been raised on the frontiers, with scarcely the advantages of a common school education, and not even habituated to read the word of God in early life. Every year is adding to the number of this class of preachers. . . . What should be done? Is not the path of duty plain as the noon-day sun? Furnish these men with the means of such education as circumstances admit. Establish a theological school."

Having obtained the hearty endorsement of the Board and Society in Boston he began at once to sound his message in the ears of the churches of New England and New York. June, July, August and a part of September were spent in this effort to explain his plan and urge its claims. His labors during that

time were prodigious. This was really the first vacation he had ever had, and he spent it, as he spent his whole life, in ceaseless activity.

In July he reports \$150 received for the School besides \$140 for mission purposes; on the 15th day of September the amount for the School had grown to \$658.52, besides books and other articles valued at \$314.50. He expresses his gratitude for these gifts, although there is an undercurrent of regret in his journal that indicates a feeling of some disappointment that the enthusiasm for the great cause was not more full and spontaneous. Dr. Babcock, in his biography of the Pioneer, calls attention to his analysis of some of the qualities of New England folks, as follows:

"We are to remember that he went everywhere with his eyes and ears, and heart, open, to learn and appreciate whatever was excellent and worthy of imitation. Occasional glintings of his convictions—as now a travelled Yankee he returned to investigate more broadly and compare more justly his native New England with fairer and more fertile regions elsewhere—will peep out in his journals and letters of this period. He particularly remarked with some astonishment the littleness and narrowness of views, the hidebound prejudices which here so generally prevailed, as they were now magnified by contrast. But he did full justice, at the same time, to the taste, the moral integrity, the industry and sobriety, as well as the provident carefulness (not to say parsimony), which he here witnessed.

"Their neat and inviting villages, with the church-edifice and the school-house in central prominence, indicated unmistakably the elements of New England's welfare and happiness. These, too, by a species of social transmission, she was sending abroad and planting and nurturing all over the fertile West. Here was the hedged-up nursery, where the seedlings were defended while taking root, and, if need be, receiving the budding or inoculation which insured the excellence of their fruits. 'But then,' said he, 'they need to be transplanted to a broader and more fertile field, where they will have ample space and

verge enough to be rooted in our broad, rich prairies, and bring forward under more genial skies their abundant products.' "

The journey homeward occupied a little more than two months. The aged mother was alone and in poor financial circumstances so her son decided that she must return with him. It was a serious undertaking for one so frail. Accordingly he had an easy two-horse carriage built under his personal direction, for his mother's comfort on the trip, and purchased an additional horse. On the 23rd of November, the last stage on the long trip, he drove forty-four miles, and reached Rock Spring in the evening. He had been absent nine months and one day. He had carried the ambitious spirit of the New West into the eastern states. He had aroused and quickened with missionary impulses many an easy-going soul and many a somnolent and self-satisfied church. He had compelled the members of half a dozen great boards and societies to turn their eyes toward the promising young empire that was building in the Mississippi Valley. He had revealed to multitudes the spiritual task and opportunity. To effect all this he had travelled 4,400 miles, chiefly by the slow method of wagon-conveyance.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Creating New Agencies of Power*

WHEN the young missionary John Mason Peck went first to the West he was a stranger and foreigner. The land was to him a *terra incognita*. He was sick in body and anxious in mind. His instructions from the Board were so vague that he did not know whether he was to labor amongst Indians or white men, whether his home was to be in town or country. He was "a raw hand." His experience in the ministry had been limited to two or three little country churches. His "regular" education had been confined to one year of study in the residence of a Philadelphia pastor. With nothing of example or precedent to guide him, and with charmingly indefinite promises of financial and other assistance, he was attacking the entire western wilderness in the name of the Almighty.

The Board that sent him knew less than he did about the country and its needs; besides this they were more interested in Burma than they were in Missouri. They had implored him to work amongst the Indians, as their need was so great—the analogy of Burma was in their minds. They seem to have regarded the white settlers as sturdy Christian gentlemen, the children of the churches of New England and the Middle States. Mr. Peck's situation had not been an enviable one, judged by the world's standards.

Now, in 1826, he arrives again in the West. All things have changed. In nine years he has gained a unique point of vantage. He knows the West better than any other living man. He knows its rivers and prairies, its jungles and clearings, its towns and settlements, from Shawneetown to Liberty and from Sangamon to the Ozarks, as the pilot knows the channel, as the

old trapper knows the haunts of game. More than this, he understands the people. They are all in his mind and in his heart. He understands them individually and as community-groups. He can classify and tabulate them, socially, racially, intellectually, ethically and with reference to their respective economic values. More than this, again, he has a quite definite plan for their redemption, their educational and social as well as their spiritual redemption. Nine years ago this man was a learner, a beginner, quite untried in pioneer work. Now he is a man of measures and resources, an experienced leader, a seasoned veteran.

His purity of spirit and singleness of aim were indicated in his attitude toward his work. Innumerable duties, the accumulation of nine months of absence, crowded upon him; while the broad plans to which his mission eastward had brought endorsement and support, urged their claims for speedy execution. He spent six hours each night in sleep and the rest of his time in toil. At this time he writes in his journal: "I burn with zeal to be laborious and do good. I never felt so far removed from selfishness or any personal desires and aims. I am somehow pressed forward in a great work. Vast and important benefits for future generations seem to hang on my personal efforts. Had I the means I could cheerfully sacrifice thousands for the good of the cause; and such as I have of time, talents, efforts, endurance, I cheerfully offer."

As a result of the successful journey which he had made Mr. Peck was able to inaugurate three new lines of activity. To his complex and splendidly organized system of itinerant evangelism, Bible work and Sunday-school enterprise he now added within three years a central Seminary for academic instruction, a weekly religious journal and circuit-preaching by a group of men carefully chosen for the task. He intended that these agencies should be definitely articulated with the earlier enterprises, and should promote their progress.

It was not his fault if this ideal was not perfectly realized in every particular. The opposition of the anti-mission Baptists

had now expressed itself in the formation of a separate body, which by its bitter spirit and its unfair propaganda, rent churches and associations asunder. When application was made for a charter for the new Seminary an anti-mission preacher who was a member of the State senate succeeded by his crafty methods in defeating the plan. Jealousy and intrigue captured also some of the men whom Mr. Peck sought to enlist in his circuit plan.

Many of them, however, had antagonized him from the beginning. His success and growing power had only inflamed their passion. What at first had been a sulky indifference or a gruff denial had now become a raucous hatred. They sought to destroy the influence of the "boss," the "dictator." They did not hesitate to write letters again and again to the various Societies in the East with which he was connected, accusing him of incompetence and failure.

It is necessary to realize the fact and fury of this long-continued persecution in order to estimate at their true value his achievements. Staggering beneath the weight of many important undertakings this venomous hostility on the part of so-called Christian ministers and churches tested his faith to the utmost. Yet those who knew him well at that period of his life bear testimony to the charity of his spirit and his steady refusal to deal harshly or vindictively with his foes.

The amount which Mr. Peck had secured to help in the founding of a Seminary was small, but he possessed a heart of hope. Contributions, he believed, would continue to come in and the expense of the school would not be large. On the first of January, 1827, a number of his staunch friends and supporters from different parts of the state met at his house in Rock Spring, in answer to his personal invitation. They decided by a unanimous vote to establish a Literary and Theological Seminary. They elected a Board of Trustees, consisting of five ministers and four laymen, under the chairmanship of Rev. James Lemen, a warm friend of the Pioneer and regarded by him as the ablest Baptist leader in the Illinois country. They then



chose a site for the school, or rather it was chosen for them by an offer of Mr. Peck to donate land on his own farm for the purpose. They decided that building operations should begin at once.

In considering the matter of financial management it was deemed wise to organize a joint-stock company, each subscriber to stock, in the amount of ten dollars or more, being entitled to one vote in the election of trustees, and to free room rental and free use of the library for his children in case they should enter the school. This was certainly a generous provision. Having reached these excellent conclusions the company departed, leaving their host, as usual, to carry the load of care and responsibility in the execution of the plans they had made. Although he was already doing the work of a dozen men he agreed to act as superintendent of construction, solicitor of funds, canvasser for pupils and organizer of the school. He knew that he could depend on Mr. Lemen, Mr. Pulliam and a few other "stalwarts" for vigorous cooperation.

In September three buildings were completed and ready for occupancy. The seminary proper was a substantial two-story wooden structure, the lower floor being designed for assembly purposes and the floor above for a dormitory. The older boys had rude bedsteads provided for them, while the small boys were to sleep on straw beds on the floor. On each side of the main building was a one-story wing. One of these was set apart for the library and the teachers' living-rooms, the other for classrooms. Near by a log-cabin was erected, to serve as a boarding-hall. A carpenter shop was also built. It is probable that the "Rock Spring Theological and High School" was one of the first institutions in the United States to adopt the plan of manual training, for provision was made from the first for informal instruction and quite an amount of active practice in carpentry and agriculture.

Before the first of October two teachers had been secured. One was to serve as principal and teach Christian theology, this term covering the whole range of special studies in which

a theological seminary indulges; the other, as professor of mathematics and natural philosophy, was to take charge of everything left over from the other department, including English, the classics and history. Mr. Peck assisted in the teaching when he was at home.

On the first of November the Seminary opened its doors. Rev. Joshua Bradley, a graduate of Brown University and a teacher of experience, had been selected as Principal, and Mr. John Russell as head of the high school department. Twenty boarding pupils and several day scholars were enrolled during the first week of the term. For four years the institution carried forward its work, at times under great financial stress, and often in face of personal misunderstandings. The number of students at one time reached a total of 130. The teachers were strong and resourceful men; and the school, in spite of its drawbacks, rendered splendid and efficient service.

The second enterprise to be launched at this period was a religious newspaper. Perhaps none of the Pioneer's plans was more stoutly opposed. Not only his old-time opponents, but many of his friends, both west and east, thought the venture unwise. He was rather heavily involved at this time, on account of disastrous conditions in the "white" church at St. Louis. Debts had multiplied. Generous supporters of the church had died. Mr. Welch had gone. The Philadelphia Board in "releasing" Mr. Peck years before, had blandly evaded all responsibilities for the work it had authorized. Mr. Peck had signed promissory notes to save the honor of the cause. These were now maturing, and his struggles to meet them, and to support his family also, were a fearful strain upon his courage and resourcefulness. He was ever the soul of nobility. In all his long life his honor was absolutely unquestioned, his character stainless. He could not involve others in these anxieties and obligations which had come upon him through his own big-heartedness and self-sacrifice. So he agonized in secret, carried forward his multifarious enterprises, and little by little met all of his indebtedness in full.

Those of his friends who knew the facts in this case, and who realized also the uncertainties of the school at Rock Spring, besought him to stay his course. Even in Boston it was difficult for a religious paper to support itself, with all of old New England and adjoining states for a constituency. To attempt such a scheme in the west, where the people were poor, the conditions crude, few journals of any kind circulated and the few little read, seemed a mad venture. Besides it would take too much of the Pioneer's time, which was already more than occupied with more important duties. However, Mr. Peck had a conviction in the matter, and he had a way of following his convictions with a persistency that thrust aside all warnings. Consequently, the paper was started.

The prospectus announcing the purpose of the new enterprise, and calling for cooperation financial and otherwise, was issued on December 2nd, 1828. It was widely circulated and elicited a great deal of curiosity but very few subscriptions. The first number of "The Pioneer of the Valley of the Mississippi" appeared on April 25th, 1829. The name of Rev. John M. Peck appears as editor, that of Rev. T. P. Greene as publisher. Mr. Greene was the occasion if not the cause for the establishment of the paper. Mr. Peck had made his acquaintance some time before. He had found him to be a practical and energetic man who combined the offices of preacher, farmer and printer, and conducted a small newspaper near St. Charles, with the help of his two sons.

It was natural that Mr. Peck, pondering upon the importance of a religious paper, should ask himself the question, "Why might not this man, with his family and printing-plant, remove to Rock Spring, send his young children to the Seminary, and convert his local newspaper into an important religious journal? It would be an advantage to Mr. Greene, to his children, to the mission work in general, and to the Baptist community in three States." This pondering issued in consultation and then in action. The Greene family moved to Rock Spring. The carpenter-shop was transformed into a printing-

office, and the history of Baptist journalism in the West began. This new venture constituted the first religious periodical in Illinois, and the first Baptist weekly paper west of Ohio.

It was never a financial success. How often in the annals of recorded time has a Baptist journal been a financial success? Even with the aid of the job-printing department, there was an annual deficit for each of the twelve years until the paper was merged with another, and ceased its independent existence. This deficit averaged about \$200, and was usually met without complaint by Mr. Peck and a few of his friends. They had the large vision, and they were right. The influence of this paper, making its way week by week into the homes of hundreds of scattered families, bearing its message of cheer and fellowship, was an agency that was greatly needed. It was a source of instruction also in many families where reading-matter was scanty and means of education slight. It was a factor of real value in uniting a wide-spread Baptist constituency, and in shaping the course of our denominational life throughout the whole region of the Mississippi Valley.

## CHAPTER IX

### *The Birth of the Home Mission Society*

THE section of country between the western boundary of Indiana and Kansas City is today one of the wealthiest and most fertile districts in the world. It abounds in cities and towns of the most prosperous character. Its prairies yield immeasurable plenitude of corn and grain. Its churches and schools and colleges; its charities and abundant philanthropies; its stable institutions and resourceful citizenship combine to make it one of the finest products of our modern civilization. It is almost impossible to imagine that this fine and most attractive country has been developed to its present status within a period of eighty years—yet such is the case. Within the life-time of men still with us this miracle has taken place.

The change seems at first to have been wrought by purely material agencies. Steam and electricity have certainly done marvellous things. Chicago with its two million people and its opulent magnificence is the most stupendous creation of the modern superman. It owes its grandeur, we say, to the age of science. Yet this is not by any means the fact. The real greatness of the Middle West lies in its ethical and spiritual attainments. It would have been a queer and crazy country, big and brutal and abominable, had it not been for the self-sacrificing labors of the missionaries of the cross.

None amongst them all was more completely devoted, or more actively alive to the responsibilities of the Christian church in moulding the character of the new age than the subject of this sketch. He saw the opportunities. He forecast the future. He realized the need for preachers and teachers possessed of the spirit of Christ.

His plan for extended circuit-preaching, though appealing less strongly to the imagination than the building of a Seminary or the founding of a newspaper, contained within it rich possibilities of far-reaching spiritual influence. He did not hasten unduly in putting it into execution. He knew by bitter experience that pledges were not cash, and might never be transformed into dollars. He knew that Boards were not infallible. So he chose his men carefully, and satisfied himself beforehand that there was a reasonable certainty of their being paid promptly and in full for their hard labor.

The Pioneer missionary had now for a dozen years been "spying out the land." His papers and manuscripts, as well as the books which he afterwards published, indicate his encyclopedic knowledge of the country and its needs. He knew that the scheme of circuit-preaching could be made a source of power, for he had followed this method with tremendous success in his own missionary labors. Also, he realized that it could then be put into effect with less friction and loss of energy than under other circumstances would have been possible, because he was so intimately familiar with the comparative needs of the various sections that he could place the preachers in the localities where the conditions were most favorable for constructive and productive effort.

For a long time he had been preparing the way for the enterprise. His journal contains such records as the following: "On this route I have rode 302 miles. This is a circuit suitable for an active missionary in this country to ride over in one month, and preach thirty times, besides attending to keeping alive Bible societies, Sunday-schools and looking well to the discipline of the churches." So now, holding the Board in Boston quietly but firmly true to their promise to contribute \$100 per year to each circuit-preacher, with the understanding that he was to secure the balance of his support from the field on which he labored, he began, about the year 1827, the selection of his men.

The first of these itinerant missionaries whom he chose was that man of Christly spirit, Lewis Williams, to whom



reference has already been made. No sooner had he gone forth on his errand of mercy than the wilderness began to rejoice and blossom as the rose. He remained in the employ of the Society, and under Mr. Peck's direction, until his death. It was only a few years, but spiritual blessings and gracious revivals were unceasing attendants of his journeyings here and there. He was an elect soul.

The "circuits" to which these men were assigned were not unduly cramped or limited. There was lots of elbow-room, especially in the inception of the undertaking. To one man was given a district "about as large as the State of Massachusetts," to another "a tract of country, thinly populated, but equal in extent to the State of Connecticut." The elder missionary found peculiar delight in the successes which from the first accompanied the work of his young brethren, in the herculean task of winning the West for God. During the years that followed the launching of the fine system of circuit administration multitudes of people in almost every section of the wide field were converted. Feeble interests grew into strong centers of Christian activity; out of Sunday-schools churches were born; the flames of pure evangelism spread from one community to another; the harvests of toilsome years of broad scattering of seed were being garnered.

Not only the West but the East felt the vital throb of this enthusiasm. At Hamilton, New York, a number of young men, hearing the story of the growing Baptist interest and opportunity in "the Golden West" dedicated their lives to service in that country. In every direction the Divine Spirit was gathering His trophies.

The year 1831 will be ever memorable in the annals of our Baptist faith for in that year Dr. Jonathan Going, a wise and trusted leader, was sent on a tour of investigation. It is no cause for wonder that the prodigious personal achievements of Mr. Peck in his wide field, the founding by him of an Academy of high grade, the establishment by him of a religious journal, the

successful prosecution by him of a system of missionary evangelism which had already attracted the interest of Christian people in all parts of the land, should have startled the slow-moving people of New England, and stirred their curiosity. Such a many-sided and productive enterprise as the Christian church has seldom seen was going forward in the new states of the west; and it was energized by the brain and heart of a humble Baptist missionary. It had grown during the years between 1824 and 1831 to a magnitude quite out of proportion to the size of the constituency which was supposed to control it.

It is forever to the honor of the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society that they "caught the vision" and adopted Mr. Peck as their representative; after the Triennial Convention, in inconceivable obtuseness and spiritual stupidity, had dismissed him and closed his mission in 1820. It is a tribute forever to the wisdom of the same Society that when they witnessed the marvellous expansion of all the interests committed to his care, they should have realized that the great work demanded a larger body of control. They said, in effect: "The labors of this man are amazing. They can no longer be governed by a State; they must belong to a nation. There should be organized a great national society to direct the home missionary enterprises of the denomination. At least this is what we think and believe. We will send a trusted messenger to find out about it." So they dispatched Dr. Going with full instructions, and eagerly awaited his report.

Five years before, on his visit to the Atlantic States, Mr. Peck had broken his journey between Litchfield and Boston, in order to visit this man. He had poured into his heart the story of the West. He had touched vibrant chords and awakened pure and sympathetic emotions. So as Mr. Peck had captured Dr. Going, he in his turn had captured the consecrated energies of the Boston Board. Hence this visit. Dr. Going was no shallow man of the moment, so, through the years that followed, he and Mr. Peck had conducted an animated correspondence,

until he had become convinced through the letters of the Pioneer of the supreme importance of his work.

On June 20, 1831, Mr. Peck, before retiring for the night, made entry in his journal of the day's events, as his custom was for many years. This is the record: "Today Elder J. Going, of Massachusetts, sent out to explore the condition of the Baptists in the West, arrived at my house." Our brother refers here to his humble private dwelling at Rock Spring. But he had a house of larger dimensions. Its roof was the blue sky and its chambers and apartments were to be found in forest, town and prairie, throughout the broad expanse of two imperial States. This larger house was his dwelling; he had lived in it day and night; and, during the whole period of Dr. Going's stay, he "kept him going" in royal and strenuous fashion.

To quote the words of Dr. Rufus Babcock: "Very earnestly did these men of kindred spirit, worthy to be reckoned 'true yoke-fellows' devote themselves for the next three months to canvassing the mighty problem: 'How can the great work of home evangelization be most efficiently promoted?' They travelled together by day and night, in sunshine and in storm, through large portions of Illinois, Missouri, Indiana and Kentucky. They conferred with all the more intelligent and pious ministers and laymen; attended associations, churches, camp-meetings, and all other gatherings of Baptists, as far as practicable; enquired and consulted, wept and prayed and rejoiced together, and finally, just before they parted in September following, at Shelbyville, Ky., there occurs the following in Mr. Peck's journal: 'Here we agreed on a plan of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society.' The next meeting records. 'I parted with Elder Going to proceed homeward.'"

Thus was born in the spirit of humble faith and earnest prayer, the great organization, whose influence has penetrated every nook and corner of our land, and which holds today a position of unrivalled power amongst the missionary agencies of America.

John Mason Peck, discoverer of the spiritual values of the New West, pioneer explorer and planter of churches, leader of leaders, inspirer of men, prophet of spiritual progress, was the founder of that organization which has been seeking for more than eighty years to achieve the evangelization of a continent.

## CHAPTER X

### *A Strenuous Career at Full Tide*

**I**T is impossible to describe in detail the many activities with which Mr. Peck was associated between the years 1830 and 1835. In some ways it was the "maximum period" in his strenuous life. He worked literally night and day. His efforts in behalf of all good things were ceaseless and always productive. There were ten or twelve departments of work with which he was intimately associated. All of them he carried forward with a buoyant and impetuous energy. He neglected none of them. The habit of neglect was foreign to his nature.

The more prominent interests were the Bible Society for which he wrought untiringly, believing that the Bible in the home was the primary source of power and spiritual energy; the Sunday School Union, in behalf of which he was constantly organizing new centres of interest; the Temperance Society, in whose interest he delivered many addresses; the Colonization Society, which owed more to his advocacy in the States of Illinois and Missouri than to that of any other man; the system of personal investigation and evangelization, which he still continued with unabated zeal in the newly-opened sections of the country; the Seminary, of which he was the agent, treasurer, and administrator; the common-schools and general education, to which he had given constant and solicitous attention from the time of his first arrival in the West; the plan of circuit-preaching conducted entirely under his supervision; the weekly religious paper "The Pioneer," of which he was the editor; the social and political problems connected with the rapid settlement of the new country, in the consideration of which he was constantly consulted and for which he was called upon to write thousands of communications; and, lastly, his own individual

interest, the farm at Rock Spring, which with his large family and the heavy demand upon his private purse, he was obliged to cultivate in order to "make both ends meet."

Some extracts from his diary, covering a few days in December, 1833, will indicate the varied character of his employments. The entries, omitting details and comments, are as follows: "Monday, December 2nd, I started for Vandalia, on the 3rd reached Vandalia, and at night attended the annual meeting of the Illinois State Bible Society. 4th: Most of the day was employed in finishing my report of the Illinois Sunday School Union. In the evening an anniversary was held in the State House. A large assembly was present and much interest excited. With prudent and energetic management it must succeed. 5th: Very busy through the day in settling and arranging business with the Sunday-school agents present and attending meetings of the Board, committees, etc. In the evening the anniversary of the Illinois State Temperance Society was held. Several addresses were delivered, and an impulse given to the cause.

"6th: Still very closely engaged in the objects of the various benevolent institutions. The annual meeting of the Illinois Institute of Education was held today, and a committee appointed to examine the various documents in my possession, digest and prepare a summary publication, and then try to arouse the people to the subject, get up public meetings, have addresses made, and thus produce general action throughout the State. In the evening the Colonization Society held a meeting and adjourned. 7th: Saturday. Busily engaged thro the day in writing. The Colonization Society again met, chose officers, and entered upon his business. 8th: Lord's Day. In the morning attended Sunday School and addressed it on the subject of Temperance; placed in the library a copy of the 'Temperance Recorder.' Then I preached to a large and attentive congregation from 1 Thess., i, 5. In the evening I gave a lecture on the Burma Mission, which was heard with great interest, and the



next day \$6.50 was handed me by Presbyterians for that Mission.

"9th: Monday. I was induced to stay on account of the adjourned Colonization meeting to be held tonight. The day was occupied in writing many letters. Evening, the Colonization Society met and discussed the resolutions, in which I took part, proposing several amendments, which were adopted. A committee was appointed to digest a document of facts to be laid before the public. Of this Committee I am one. Thus I have an amount of business of various descriptions thrown upon my shoulders, which will, with my Sunday school concerns, occupy me very closely the whole winter. 10th and 11th: Journeyed home and found all well."

He makes the following notes toward the end of the month: "22d. Preached the funeral discourse for the late Governor Edwards in the court-house, Edwardsville. Not only was the house crowded, but a multitude were out of doors, the weather being pleasant. I took a passage from Ezekiel xi, 12, for a text: 'Her strong rods were broken and withered,' in which I portrayed the qualities of an eminent statesman. A call was made next day for the publication of the discourse with a short memoir of his life and character, which will be complied with. 23d and 24th: Spent in Belleville, conversing widely as possible on common-school education, and trying to enlist leading persons in this subject.

"28th: Saturday. For three days I have been closely occupied in arranging my correspondence and other papers, and in preparing articles for the Pioneer on education, temperance, and colonization. I have divers important letters to answer and much other business which will require my utmost efforts to perform. Lord's day, 29th: Preached at Lebanon from the eighth chapter of Romans. Church business followed, and several cases of difficulty occurred. This church has lost considerable in order and piety within a few months. In the afternoon it rained severely, and I rode home in the storm."

These succinct memoranada, covering a period of only a few

days, form a typical account of the labors that ran through all the years. Yet, though the tasks are multiplied and seem exceedingly varied, they bore toward one end, the achievement of a single purpose, the Redemption of the West.

He never made the mistake into which so many ministers and missionaries have fallen, of differentiating sharply between public and philanthropic interests on the one hand, and distinctly spiritual activities on the other; and attending only to the latter. To him all life was sacred, and to all life, in its diversified relations, he gave his sympathies and his efforts. A brief glance at some of his operations during this period will indicate this.

All things about him were in a state of flux, changing and expanding. Multitudes of people, year by year, were thronging into this great region. Problems were becoming more intricate and perplexing. From the very beginning he had realized the historic importance of this development. He had talked with numbers of the keener and more intelligent of the old settlers, and had made extensive notes on these conversations. He had availed himself of every opportunity to observe and record the progress of events, in the unfolding life of the country. He had collected manuscripts and pamphlets of every sort, bearing upon the subject.

The best known of the books which he wrote, his "Life of Daniel Boone," was a product of his later years. In this vivid sketch he recounts the struggles of the famous pioneer to subdue the wilderness. But he had done much literary work before that. In 1831 he issued the first edition of his "Guide to Emigrants," which by reason of its fulness and accuracy became a text-book for prospective settlers. It is a mine of information. In the introduction the author tells us that no portion of the Mississippi Valley "is so much the subject of enquiry, and excites so particularly the attention of the emigrant, as the states of Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and the parts adjacent. Although these new states have come into existence within the past 15 years, they have been unparalleled in their growth, both in the

increase of population and the increase of property; but none have equalled in progress that of Illinois within the past five years. In 1825 Illinois contained less than 75,000 inhabitants. In September, 1830, they exceeded 161,000. In 1824 Missouri numbered a fraction over 80,000; in 1828, 112,000; and in June, 1830, 140,000."

The author states that he had recently received more than a hundred letters, asking all kinds of questions "on subjects about which a man is anxious to inform himself before deciding upon a removal, which may aid him on his journey, and which may enable him successfully to surmount the difficulties of an untried land." To answer these in detail was impossible. The only feasible method of meeting this ever-increasing body of requests and questions was to write a book. So he wrote it; and its popularity was immediate. Edition after edition was published and sold. It is a small volume, but its 330 pages are crowded with facts.

The land and the people, the flora and fauna, the manners and customs of the different localities, the climate and soil in the several counties and sections are carefully described. The author tells how farming is conducted; how buildings are erected; what diseases are prevalent; what industries may be made most profitable; what prices are asked for land, for articles of food and for clothing. He indicates also the educational and religious conditions in different parts, and, in an Appendix, sketches the route of a proposed "Great Railway," the "Atlantic and Michigan," by the building of which the sea-coast cities and states would be connected with Illinois, Missouri, Michigan and the Northwest Territory. He says in closing that if this dream could be realized, the rich products of the wide-spread Mississippi Valley "would be driven to the shores of the Atlantic with far greater speed than if wafted by the wings of the wind; and the rapid return of commercial equivalents would spread life and prosperity over the face of the finest and fairest portion of the habitable world."

This book became what its title indicates as its purpose. It was an illuminating and most instructive guide to intending

emigrants amongst the older states of the East and South, and as well in England, Scotland and Ireland. But, while he never derived large pecuniary returns from the wide circulation which the "Guide" attained, he had the satisfaction of knowing as time went on that it was instrumental in bringing hosts of intelligent settlers into the great Western country. As the author was usually in need of ready money and disliked financial "dickering," he sold the copyright of this as soon as it was ready for publication. He did the same in the case of his other books.

Mr. Peck's advocacy of temperance principles was definite and radical. In those days multitudes of church members and many preachers were accustomed to indulge more or less in intoxicants "for the stomach's sake" or for other reasons. Mr. Peck early became a total abstainer and a preacher of prohibition. In addressing new converts he was accustomed to exhort them especially to three things: 1, to abstain entirely from all ardent spirits; 2, to perform family prayer daily and to instruct their children; 3, to make it a conscientious business to support the Gospel.

In writing to the "Baptist Missionary Magazine" he says, under date of April 25, 1832: "I have this day addressed between 2,000 and 3,000 people standing near the gallows in Green county—my whole discourse being directed against the practice of drinking ardent spirits; this being prominently the vice of the unhappy culprit who was about to be launched into eternity! This he confessed was the cause of all the wretchedness. My practice in such addresses is to attack the popular habit of drinking ardent spirits, wines, etc., as laying the foundation for intemperate habits. In the evening I again addressed the people on the same subject in the Court House."

The following extract from his journal, written at about the same time as the above, shows how vigorously he condemns the use of strong drink by church-members. Speaking of a church which he visited in the course of his journeys, he says: "A case of discipline came before the church, which it was supposed would result in the exclusion of the offender. He is a physician,

and a man of talents, but has for many years been addicted to intemperance. Two years since he professed religion and united with this church, and this is the third time he has been subject to church censure, and now under aggravated circumstances.

"The brethren present desired me to labor with him. I first conversed with him in the presence of two or three brethren, till he appeared somewhat humble—then I had him make a confession before the whole congregation and pledge himself to total abstinence in future. I then gave him a solemn admonition, telling him that if he again indulged in the use of ardent spirits he was ruined. Then the church first, and afterwards the whole assembly were addressed—the 51st Psalm L. M. was then sung—the hand of fellowship given by all the church as a token of his restoration, at the close of which he knelt, and for him prayer was offered.

"Nearly every person present (and the house was crowded; among the rest were the Governor and the ex-Governor of the State) was in tears. I mention these particulars as a specimen of the course I am resolved to pursue with intemperate professors. Drunkenness has been a crying sin in the Baptist churches of the West. In this region we are resolved to have but one time of labor with a drunkard, and that shall be thorough."

Mr. Peck's attention to other matters of economic and public welfare did not for one moment divert his mind from the work of the Seminary, and of education in general. He had been convinced for some time past that the school was not in the right locality for a broad and productive work. Yet the attempt to make a change without able financial backing seemed a formidable task.

When Dr. Going made his tour of exploration, and Mr. Peck took him on that strenuous three-months' horse-back ride, the two men talked frequently concerning the matter. They visited various sites, deemed eligible for the planting of a school, including that at Upper Alton, which was finally selected. They came to quite emphatic agreements upon four points: that the Seminary must be located at a central and strategic place; that



Rock Spring was not such a place; that Alton was such a place, and that an Education Society should be formed in the east, to aid financially the work of this school and any others which might be established.

So, as a result of many months of careful deliberation and personal conferences with men of influence, it was decided that the Rock Spring school should be closed, with a view to its reopening at Upper Alton. A sightly location was chosen and a tract of land purchased. Alton was thought at that time to possess advantages for general intercourse superior to those of any spot in the State. It was on the Mississippi, one mile from its junction with the Missouri, where the commerce of the widespread regions of the north-east, north and north-west must arrive. The main artery of traffic from all the northern portions of Illinois passed through this place. It was expected that the great National Road then building in Ohio and Indiana, toward the capital of Missouri, would pass at or near Alton. It had the best landing for steamboats on the east bank of the Mississippi, and plans were in progress to make it the seat of government for the state.

Alton Seminary, which was soon renamed Alton College and afterwards Shurtleff College, was opened to students in September, 1832. Pending the erection of a suitable building, the town-house was occupied by the new school. Rev. Hubbel Loomis, a scholarly man and a teacher of long experience, was elected Principal. Mr. Peck was a member of the Board of Trustees and as usual the leading spirit in the enterprise. Financial problems were the greatest drawback, as is always the case with denominational schools in their infancy—and subsequently. An Academic Hall was built and used chiefly for classroom purposes. Mr. Loomis was commissioned to search the eastern states for funds. He spent six months in arduous canvassing and returned with \$490, net. This was at once used to liquidate in part the debts already contracted. Things went on in struggling fashion for two or three years. Grand work was done by



devoted teachers in the school, but the trustees were feeble and inefficient.

The outlook was disheartening. After serious deliberation, the trustees turned to Mr. Peck and urged him to canvass the east again in the hope that he might succeed where Mr. Loomis had failed. So in April, 1835, he left home. His mission was of critical importance, for the destinies of Baptist education in Illinois hung in the balance. His trip took seven months. It was similar to the one he had made nine years before. By sermons, addresses, the circulation of printed literature and numbers of private conferences he sought to arouse the people.

Dr. Going had not forgotten his obligations in relation to the matter. Through his influence there had been organized in Boston two years before, the "Western Baptist Educational Association," for the purpose of "helping to preserve the West by educating its inhabitants and teaching them the fear of the Lord." Mr. Peck was able to make use of this body in connection with his campaign. Shortly before his return he secured from Dr. Benjamin Shurtleff a subscription of \$10,000, conditional on securing a charter provision changing the name of the institution. The financial results of the expedition were eminently satisfactory. In cash and good subscriptions about \$20,000 were obtained.

During the absence of the special agent the trustees had held only a single meeting. They had not even replied to his letters. They had not troubled themselves with doubts or anxieties, they had trusted their leader fully, and in his absence had dropped the agency work in Illinois, the building operations and all other responsibilities, and had dwelt serenely in the tents of ease. His return, however, galvanized them into awakened activity. His hands were full of money, and his brain full of plans. The college had been saved, and its history of faithful and aggressive work now commenced.

## CHAPTER XI

### *Ill Health and an Expanding Field*

**I**MMEDIATELY after his return from the Atlantic States, Mr. Peck settled down at Upper Alton for a period of two months. He was sadly needed. He occupied a room in the newly-built dormitory, and began straightening out the tangles, inspiring the teachers with confidence, shaking up the trustees and making all things move with vigorous efficiency. During the early months of the following year, 1836, in addition to his ordinary duties, his editorial work and the demands of the College, he completed and published a new map of Illinois, a revision and enlargement of one he had formerly made and remade, and issued a new edition of his "Guide for Emigrants."

In the spring he was busy removing his newspaper, with the printing plant, from Rock Spring to Lower Alton. About the end of May he was stricken with billious fever. After a very critical illness he slowly regained his strength. From this time onward, however, his health was never robust, and at times he was laid aside for long periods. This, to a man of his tremendous energy, was a severe affliction. In the service of God and man he had made heavy demands upon his life-force, and the inevitable effects he was now beginning to feel.

On the last day of June the first number of "The Western Pioneer" appeared. This was simply a continuation of the paper he had edited for some years, but its new location rendered advisable a change of name, especially in view of new features to be henceforth embodied in its columns. In August there was organized at Springfield through his efforts, the "Illinois Baptist Education Society," the object of which was to aid financially and otherwise, such students for the ministry as should

be deemed worthy of assistance. This society, after eighty years of history, continues to-day its beneficent activities.

In September he was prostrated by illness during a tour in Missouri. For two weeks he was confined to his bed. When he had only partially recovered he started toward home but was again attacked, and lay sick for ten days at the house of a friend. The rest of the year was spent in preaching, editorial work, the administration of the College, and general missionary oversight. Early in 1837 he prepared two lectures, afterwards published, on the "Early History of Illinois." These he delivered at Vandalia, then the capital, before the members of the legislature.

That a certain ancient irritation persisted, in connection with his itinerant labors, is evident from the following note in his diary during a tour through portions of Missouri: "Called on a Baptist preacher by the name of Stevens, a determined anti-missionary. Was treated kindly by him, but he said very decidedly that he would have done the same for old friends if we had been gamblers. Such were his notions of all missionaries and he preaches this boldly. He is a man of talents and a good speaker." The "antis" were evidently just as bitter in 1837 as in 1817, but their influence had greatly diminished. After this they remained at a standstill, both in numbers and in power; while the growth of the "regular" Baptists was steady and swift.

During this year, a period of financial peril and panic throughout America, the Home Mission Board threatened to discontinue the amounts they had hitherto contributed toward the support of the missionaries or circuit-preachers in the West. To Peck this drastic action, due to the acute pecuniary distress of the Board, meant the breaking of faith on their part, and suffering or perhaps starvation to the faithful missionaries. So, laying aside all his large and important tasks, he devoted his time to a personal canvass of the churches of Illinois and Missouri; and thus succeeded in securing enough money to make up the deficiency caused by the temporary withdrawal of the remittances hitherto supplied by the Society.

His own circumstances were embarrassing and caused him great anxiety. He had difficulty in obtaining money enough to keep his family from feeling the pinch of hunger, while the deficits on the paper were heavy. So "betwcentimes" he labored on his farm, procuring by this means a satisfactory harvest. The Bible and Sunday-school agencies he had resigned some time before, since the State Societies which he had organized were carrying forward his activities through local officers. He had rendered invaluable service through his years of toil in securing this effective and permanent result. His time was still more than occupied, however, with the other vital interests which he had planted, and which were developing under his care.

Central in all his efforts, as of old, was his preaching. As the years went on he became less doctrinal and more evangelistic. Although conversions had always attended and followed his ministry he now saw more abundant and gracious ingatherings. During the autumn of 1837 he was engaged in fruitful revival meetings in Rock Spring, Edwardsville, and the Bethel church. His experiences seem to have quickened his love for work in the local parish. Frequently he had been urged to accept pastorates but had always promptly declined. Now, however, he agreed to take the pastorate of the church at Rock Spring, with the stipulation that he was to devote only a quarter of his time to the field.

The terms of this agreement were indicated with his usual care of details. He agreed to visit each family of the church at least once a quarter, and to preach three or four times each month. This did not mean once every Sunday, but three or four preaching services on two successive days of one week in the month. This method was customary in those days. It is still followed in country districts where a minister will often hold the pastorate of four scattered churches, preaching at each place on one Saturday and Sunday, and visiting the parishioners during the week preceding or following such appointment.

At the meeting of the State Convention he was appointed the General Agent of that body. He combined with this office

the supervision of the missionaries of the Home Mission Society in the Western field. This had been an unofficial part of his work for some years; but he now resumed his former duty of direct and immediate supervision. A few months before this he had refused the general agency of the American and Foreign Bible Society for all the Northwestern States.

A new country, very fertile and promising, was being rapidly settled in Northeastern Missouri and Iowa. With his perennial zest for pioneering he made two long tours through this section in the year 1838, each occupying about six weeks. He set down in his journal elaborate memoranda, and made a full report of his ministration to the Home Mission Society. He found that the character of the immigration was above the average, consisting for the most part of a substantial, thrifty, Protestant class of people. Many of them were Baptists, already gathering into small groups as churches. They were busy erecting buildings for worship in various localities. In this work, and in awakening and stimulating religious activity of every sort, he imparted freely and enthusiastically his counsel and help. Toward the end of the year he was very ill for two months, and lay for some time between life and death, suffering greatly.

Increased facilities for travel, together with a completer organization of churches and associations in Illinois and Missouri, caused a gradual change in Mr. Peck's methods of missionary work. They became less intensive though even more widespread than before. His interest in Northern Illinois and Iowa extended his labors in one direction. The removal of his paper, the "Western Pioneer," to Kentucky, and its union with the "Baptist Banner," in 1839, elicited his sympathies for the people of that state, so he was frequently called southward. He was invited to give practical advice in church matters and to adjust difficulties. He made several tours in Kentucky, preaching where opportunity offered and delivering lectures on the subjects of temperance and colonization. He was also in close fellowship with the new editor of the "Banner and Pio-



neer," giving him the advantage of his wisdom in hearty and generous fashion.

He made four long journeys among the churches in the year 1839, one in Kentucky, two in Missouri and one in Central and Northern Illinois. In the course of this last trip he made his first visit to Chicago. He was the guest of Rev. I. T. Hinton, pastor of the First Church, and preached several times in the growing young town. He also visited the Fox River Association, in session at Elgin, speaking there out of his rich experience on the "Origin, Rise and Progress of the Baptists of Illinois."

From two of these four expeditions he returned home utterly exhausted and suffering keenly. On October 29, 1839, he writes in his journal: "After much serious reflection I have come to the conclusion that I must give up all travelling and all missionary agency. I have now made trials for four seasons, and *cannot* sustain the fatigue, labor and exhaustion. My liver is permanently affected, my constitution seriously impaired, and I must retire to a more quiet and sedentary life."

Two days later he makes the following entry: "This day I am fifty years old—turned half a century. When I look back, how short and frail a thing is life! Not only my years are gone, but my physical powers have failed greatly within a few years past. I am now an old man, and ought to regard myself as such, and be looking every day for my great change. O Lord, help me to consecrate myself to Thy work and cause. Help me to live the rest of my feeble life to Thy glory." These words sound strangely pessimistic; but they are like the roaring of a lion who finds himself wounded. More eager than ever for the service of his Master, he chafed at the limitations of ill-health, and the constantly recurring attacks which spoiled his energy.

That he fought like a hero in the midst of these handicaps is shown by his annual Report to the Home Mission Society, compiled at the close of this year 1839. He had written during the year 294 letters on missionary business, visited and labored continuously in seventeen different churches, attended four associations, preached on the mission field sixty-four sermons,



delivered thirty-eight lectures and addresses and travelled 3526 miles, 1116 by steamboat and stage and 2410 on horseback or in his carriage.

This is strictly and solely a report of his distinctly missionary labors. For instance, the number of letters written, though it seems large, was only a tithe of his entire correspondence. In the first two months of this same year he wrote 225 letters, every one with his own hand, and many of them voluminous. He always made a written digest of all his letters. These manuscript digests contained the substance of the communications and he kept them for reference purposes. They were written on foolscap, and bound together at intervals; the whole constituting after a time a bulky pile of volumes.

Acting upon the advice which he gave to himself on his fiftieth birthday, he accepted a call to the pastorate of the church at Belleville, Illinois, for "quarter time." Thus half his time was to be devoted to local church work. Some months before this he had declined a call from the flourishing church at Lexington, Ky., to succeed the well-known and popular Dr. Noel, who had just died. He entered upon his duties at Belleville with characteristic earnestness, visiting all the families of his flock and crowding the church with people who came to hear his course of lectures on Sacred History.

In June 1840 he attended the Convention of Western Baptists in Louisville. He was appointed chairman of a committee to draw up a constitution for that body. This was done, and the Convention ordered it printed, and referred it to the convention and general associations of the western states, final action to be taken the following year. At a later meeting of the convention he was asked to revise the "Social Hymn Book," then in use amongst the churches of the West and South, "by removing the doggerel and inserting good hymns in their places." It is a testimony to the "infinite variety" of this versatile man that he accepted the appointment and carried the task through successfully.

In the autumn of 1840 he found time, in addition to his

other manifold duties, to take the United States Census in St. Clair County. Some weeks later he accepted the oversight of the St. Louis church for "part time;" the late pastor, Rev. R. E. Pattison, D.D., afterward president of Colby University, having resigned. In June he again attended the Convention of Western Baptists at Louisville. It was a stormy session. Some of the delegates were determined to sever connection with the Eastern Societies and establish independent missionary organizations. Mr. Peck opposed this policy; but finally succeeded in effecting a compromise. By his personal influence he secured the establishment of a "Western Baptist Publication and Sunday-school Society," which was pledged to conduct its enterprises in strict cooperation with that in Philadelphia. In the matter of home and foreign missions the West remained in the same relations as before with the East.

When the question of the appointment of an executive agent for the new society was broached the thoughts of the leaders naturally turned toward the man who had effected the adjustment of this vital matter. He realized the importance of the situation, but the precarious condition of his health and the fact that all of his active life had been spent in another field, bade him refuse. For three months he considered the question with profound attention, consulting with the strong men of the denomination regarding it. Finally, toward the end of September, he accepted the position, being persuaded that the work required him rather than any other man at that critical juncture.

He resigned his various pastorates. In October he attended the Illinois Convention, and was elected President, besides being given abundant assurance of the love and esteem in which he was held by the Baptist people of the state. In November he arrived in Louisville to take up his new work. Within a month, he was deeply immersed in plans and labors. He had forgotten his weakness of body. He was as a young man, just entering upon his first campaign for God.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Serving the Publication Society*

**M**R. PECK is regarded by students of Baptist history as the real founder of two of our three great missionary organizations, the Home Mission Society and the Publication Society. To him even more than to Dr. Jonathan Going is due the honor of setting in motion the forces which created the former, for he inspired Dr. Going, as he did many other men of vision, with a noble ambition to meet the needs of the Western country; and as a direct result of his serious personal conferences and fiery public appeals, the Home Mission Society was created.

It was also his task and privilege to establish the faltering and incompetent Publication Society in Philadelphia upon a solid basis and to give it a permanent place in the thoughts and affections of the Baptist people throughout the land. The four and a half years which he spent in advocacy of publication and Sunday-school work in the North and South were noteworthy in the history of our denomination. He began his service for the Western Publication Society by a swift and awakening campaign amongst the Southern States, which were really its chief constituency. He swept through State after State, spending more than three months on this tour.

Returning from New Orleans by easy stages to St. Louis, and visiting many churches by the way, he took time to see his family at Rock Spring and the College at Alton. Then in obedience to the demands of the situation, and in view of the strained relations between the East and West in publication and Sunday-school policies, he decided to undertake a journey to the Atlantic Coast. It was his third pilgrimage eastward in twenty-five years. Travelling by way of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia,

he arrived in New York early in May, 1842, in time to attend the national anniversaries, and to make an impassioned appeal before the Publication Society, urging the vigorous support of ministers, Sunday-schools and churches in the south and west.

He then returned to Philadelphia and met the members of the Board. To these men, rather feeble and indolent in the larger matters of the kingdom, he laid down the law in splendid fashion. He told them that they had been inharmonious and cantankerous. Petty jealousies and rivalries about offices and minor matters had baulked their efficiency. He urged them to exert their powers for the accomplishment of bigger things. They applauded his sentiments and went about their narrow tasks on the morrow, as though they had not heard him. Nevertheless he had hopes that they might still be roused to action, for he writes: "Yet, with sufficient effort and patient perserverance, the Society *can* be made to live."

He went to New York and Boston, preaching many times in those cities and on the way. He spoke at the annual meetings of the Northern Baptist Education Society, and the New England Sunday-school Union. He gave also a powerful address before the Massachusetts Baptist Convention on "The Effect of Missionary Operations in the Western Valley," and attended a dozen other associations and conventions, speaking at all of them.

His whole object was to enlist the sympathies and efforts of the well-placed and highly-favored people of the East in the magnificent opportunities which the South and West presented. Philadelphia, New York and Boston had been singularly apathetic with regard to the needs of the newer cities of Louisville, New Orleans, St. Louis and Chicago, and all the territory that lay about them. In consequence of this attitude the great and growing cities of these "regions beyond" desired to do their own work, and to separate themselves completely from the unproductive efforts of eastern men. It was the whole-souled purpose of the Pioneer missionary to bring together the two elements and to effect the organization of a national Society that should diffuse a knowledge of the Bible and of religious literature, and

thus make the Baptist body more intelligently harmonious in matters of faith and practice.

To this object he devoted himself for six months. He was still the general agent of the Western Society, but by the terms of the contract, he was under the direction of the Philadelphia Society. It was an embarrassing situation. He was harshly criticized in the paper on which his own name appeared as one of the editors, the "Banner and Pioneer," because he had, according to it's view, abandoned the Western agency, in which he was employed, for labor in behalf of the Society in Philadelphia.

Thoroughly convinced in his own mind that a creditable publication society, for the issuance of Bibles, tracts, pamphlets and religious literature of every kind, was a necessity, Mr. Peck kept steadily on his way. He had a difficult piece of work to do. The other two great missionary organizations filled the thoughts of the people. They could not see the need for a third society of large dimensions; the little establishment at Philadelphia was to their way of thinking quite sufficient, and if the West and South now had another society of their own so much the better. By his ceaseless effort, in associations, churches and personal interviews, Mr. Peck did much to change their point of view.

After a second conference with the Board in Philadelphia, in which he again urged the adoption of a broad and inclusive programme, he turned his face homeward. After his arrival, early in November, he attended to many matters which had accumulated during his absence; consulted with the college authorities at Alton; preached and lectured in all directions; made a voluminous written report to the Philadelphia Board, embodying his plan for the establishment of the Publication Society on a permanent basis; and wrote hundreds of letters to leading men of the denomination on the subject of Bible and publication work. He also brought together at this time a large number of pamphlets and manuscript records, containing sketches of Baptist churches, ministers and prominent men.



He did this with an eye to the possibility of future publication of the history of the denomination in the West and South.

Fortunately or unfortunately—probably the latter—he had become enamored of the spirit of prophecy sometime before this. A sermon which his friend Mr. Hinton preached at the Convention in Louisville in 1840 on “Signs of the Second Coming” aroused his interest in the subject. He made a careful study of figures and types and prophecies, and prepared a series of lectures on the subject, which he delivered in various places. The time was not wholly wasted, however, for his mind was relieved by those speculations from the heavier and more exacting duties of his daily life. His curiosity in these matters seems to have lasted for three or four years. The range and versatility of his powers is illustrated by the fact that he wrote, at about this period in his life, an elaborate drama, entitled “Tecumthe” and had it staged by the students at Alton, and acted at one of the public exhibitions of Commencement week.

In February, 1843, Mr. Peck was elected to the office of Secretary of the American Baptist Publication Society. He had been asked beforehand whether he would accept the position and on what terms. In answer, he had set forth the conditions of his acceptance in a blunt and business-like way. The denomination, he had said, must be inspired with confidence in the management and efficiency of the Society. Economy in incidentals must be rigorously practiced. A searching investigation into every department of the organization must at once be carried out, with a view to reconstructive policies. The members of the Board must pledge themselves to cooperate actively with the Secretary. The duties of the Secretary, as he saw them, he carefully set forth, and in describing them he pictured no idler’s paradise.

The new Secretary arrived in Philadelphia on the 17th of April and began the next day an intimate inspection of the affairs of the Society. His first public appearance was a week or so later at the Baptist Anniversaries at Albany, where he presented the annual report of the Society, prepared by his



predecessor. Returning to his work he gave himself heart and soul for five weeks to the labor of mastering the tasks and problems of his office. His family had remained in the West, his sons conducting the farm, as they had been doing for several years. He decided to begin with himself in saving expenses for the Society, so he took up his lodgings in the Depository Building. Thus he was close to his work day and night.

The history of the toils, the personal sacrifices, the resolute grappling with perplexing problems and the constant journeyings amongst the churches cannot be related in detail. They can be summarized, and their object indicated in a single phrase: He sought to create a strong public sentiment in favor of the Society. He used two methods; he described the great need, and he appealed to Baptist loyalty to meet the situation in a noble and effective way.

He was greatly hampered in his efforts by the fact that the Foreign Mission Society was forty thousand dollars in debt, a large amount for those days, and was canvassing every part of the eastern country for funds to relieve their extreme embarrassment. At every convention, in almost every church, his appeal was met by the cry: "What we can give to benevolence must go to the Society that needs it most." Had the Publication Society been long established or everywhere favorably regarded much more could have been done. Besides this, the anti-slavery movement was forging forward apace, and the strife and contention were proving a heavy handicap to all missionary organizations.

In spite of these difficulties Mr. Peck accomplished splendid results in the way of general promotion. He visited nearly all the Eastern, Middle and Southern states again and again. He planned the system of branch depositories. He enlarged the staff of agents and colporteurs. The contributions also increased year by year. By virtue of the eirenic and thoroughly Christian spirit which he manifested he was able to keep the northern and southern churches together in the joint support of the Publication Society, during his term of office, in spite of the fact

that secession had already invaded successfully the ranks of the older Societies.

In May, 1846, he resigned his office. After twenty-five years of missionary labor in the West he had found it difficult to adjust himself to an entirely new environment. Besides this, it was not his habit to work under masters or to modify his policies to suit the desires of a Board of Trustees. In other words he pined for the free life of the prairies and he fretted under limitations. He returned with great joy to his home and dear ones; and was received with enthusiasm by his friends.

He had visited Rock Spring once each year during his term as Secretary, and on one of these visits had had a thrilling experience, which nearly cost him his life. He was on his way from Cincinnati to St. Louis by boat. On the last Sunday of the year he had preached to the Captain, crew and passengers from the text: "The end of all things is at hand." The words were strangely prophetic. On Jan. 3rd the steamer entered the Mississippi River from the Ohio and turned northward. The following account of the accident which ensued is written in Mr. Peck's own graphic style:

"Jan. 3d. Our boat lay by for some hours this morning before light, as the navigation was deemed dangerous. At sunset we were a few miles above Herculaneum. At nine o'clock the cabin passengers signed a testimonial of thankfulness to the captain for his carefulness and prudence in navigating the boat amid the dangers of the Mississippi at this low stage of water, as snags abound in the channel. Retired to my berth at about half past nine, with my clothes on except my coat, the night being very cold. After considerable time I fell asleep.

"Near eleven o'clock I was awakened by a dreadful crash: the boat struck a large snag, scarcely above the surface of the water. I heard nearly at the same instant screams of distress and sprang from my berth, put on my coat, seized one boot, but before I could put it on the water was rushing into my stateroom. Without boots or hat I rushed on to the guard, seized

the projecting portion of the hurricane (or upper) deck, where, after considerable difficulty, I succeeded in getting on to that deck. A number of persons were already there and many more got on from the stern afterward. The bow was so far under water as to cover the guards, but the stern held up some time longer.

“Hearing cries from the ladies’ cabin I got the pole of a wagon on the deck, and, thrusting it in at the sky-light, tried to pry off the roof, but found it impossible. The ladies, however, succeeded in getting on the hurricane deck, as did most of the steerage passengers. The boat was then floating sideways during the current and soon ran on another snag and careened partly over. The hull of the boat then separated and floated alongside the cabin and upper works. Next the smoke-stacks (or chimneys) fell, which tore off the end of the hurricane deck. Captain Howell, with several other persons, was killed or knocked overboard by the fall of the chimneys. The wheel-houses were soon separated from the deck and floated off or sunk.

“Finding myself exposed to the piercing atmosphere I got down on the guards. But before this I had prayed repeatedly with the people around me. At first there was much confusion, and many screams and howlings to God for mercy. Some professors of religion prayed consistently. Soon the hull struck a bluff-bar and turned nearly over. Persons now gathered planks, doors and pieces of the wreck to swim on. I looked about for something of the kind, but finally concluded to stick by the wreck while it floated.

“The hurricane deck fell after awhile. We were now on a sort of raft, formed by the cabin-floor and guards. The current bore us, first on one side, then in the middle, then on the other side of the river. Some were entirely wet, with very little clothing on. They suffered intensely. A steamer lay at the shot-tower, and as we passed near we aroused the men on board, who came off in their yawl. As it neared the wreck, I directed

them to first relieve the women and children who were perishing. They put most of them on shore. The next time the yawl came near the stern on my side. Seeing a little girl quite helpless I caught her up and leaped into the boat.

"By this time we had floated a long distance down the current, and were landed a full mile below Videpoche. I had to walk without boots or shoes. My stockings were soon worn through. The ground was frozen hard, and its sharpness hurt me at every step. One foot was frozen about the ball and very much cut. I carried, too, one of the babes of Mrs. Snell, a passenger. On reaching the first house they would not let us in. At the next we obtained shelter and refreshment.

"Soon after a little girl was brought in by some men, entirely cold, speechless, senseless. I got a blanket, removed her wet and frozen garments and rubbed her with flannels and vinegar. It was about an hour before she began to moan, and more than four hours before any warmth appeared, except about the heart. She so far recovered before I left the place as to speak. Another girl was brought in dead. The yawl went four times to the wreck, and the ferry-boat 'Icelander' helped to complete the work. Soon as daylight dawned I went to the store and bought a cap and shoes. At an early period, and when the boat was breaking up, I fully expected death, as I could not swim, but felt calm and resigned, no ecstacy and no fear, but perfect self-possession with ability to think of and care and pray for others. Eternity will never seem nearer till I enter it.

"Blessed be God for his goodness to me. I consider myself under additional obligation, anew to devote myself unreservedly to his service."

## CHAPTER XIII

### *Quiet Years—And the End*

THE last few years in the life of "the old Pioneer" were spent in comparative quiet. The period of his great adventuring was over. The wilderness had become a garden. Railways were being built and many steamboats were on the rivers. Settlements had grown into towns and towns into cities. Colleges were springing up in all directions. Civilization was marching merrily forward, carrying its comforts and cultures into every part of the broad valley. In the thirty years since Mr. Peck first landed in St. Louis such a transformation had been wrought as was never known in any section of the globe since the morning stars sang together.

It had been this man's privilege to see with his own eyes these startling changes and this amazing growth. But more than this was true, much more than this. He knew little about shops and banks and business; he had a wholesome dread of politics and he cared less than nothing for social prestige; yet he had done far more than any other man, more than any group of men, to promote the moral and religious welfare of the people of two sovereign States. He had been in a real sense the maker and moulder of better things in the life of the New West, the apostle of spiritual realities, the stalwart prophet of the wilderness, a revealer of the hidden mysteries of God to innumerable souls.

He had now closed his career of public leadership. He had not, however, terminated his period of usefulness. By no means! He carried forward with undiminished zeal four lines of consecrated effort. His preaching and evangelistic work were a source of inspiration to the churches which he visited. His multifarious correspondence kept him in intimate connec-



tion with a vast variety of interests. His literary work enabled him to utilize the stores of information which he had accumulated. His lectures and addresses, for which there was constant call, gave him an educational opportunity.

His preaching was confined chiefly to the churches which he had known and nurtured in former days, at Rock Spring, Edwardsville, Belleville, Bethel and St. Louis. For the African Baptist Church in St. Louis, which had grown out of his very earliest labors in the western field, he always entertained the deepest solicitude, and in the last years of his life he gave special attention to the needs of this humble company of Christians, and to the other colored church which had been formed as an off-shoot of the parent body. While supplying for a period of nine months the white Baptist Church in St. Louis, which had also grown out of the original church of his planting, he succeeded in clearing off a debt of \$12,000, the last of a heavy mortgage which had lain upon it for many years.

Through his ministry in St. Louis a large number of German and Dutch people were converted to Baptist views, and as a direct result a German church was founded, and also the German Baptist Mission of the West. In 1851 he accepted a call to the pastorate of the Bethel Church, in Southern Illinois, and continued his ministry there until October, 1853, when he became pastor of the church in Covington, Kentucky, across the Ohio River from Cincinnati. Here he remained less than four months. His health broke down almost completely, and so, in a precarious state, he returned to his home at Rock Spring. The last four years of his life following his resignation at Covington, were attended by constant distress of body, and he did little preaching.

His correspondence was always a matter of marvel to his friends. It was a common habit of his to write fifteen or twenty letters a day, some of them covering three or four big sheets of foolscap. He was for many years the "Bishop" and spiritual adviser of the Mississippi Valley, so multitudes of letters, of every sort and description, found their way into his



study. He was extremely conscientious in his treatment of these communications. He employed no Secretary; he answered each letter personally; he filed a digest of their replies. Responding to numberless questions and requests he gave forth abundantly his counsel, help, money, inspiration and his opinions on theological themes.

At times the burden became almost overwhelming. In the last years of his life, however, when his long journeys had been discontinued, and it was possible for him to keep easily abreast of his letter-writing duties, he greatly relished this part of his work, and was able to exercise a beneficent ministry, alike of helpfulness and instruction, through this agency.

His literary work was now carried forward with few interruptions. He completed and published his authoritative "Life of Daniel Boone." He edited and published the "Annals of the West," an octave volume of more than 600 pages. He wrote a series of papers for the St. Louis "Republic" on the "Pioneers of the West." He wrote and published the "Life of Father Clark." He superintended the publication of "The Mississippi River Illustrated," an ambitious work, adorned with splendid engravings; but the unreliability of the man who was securing the plates and writing the descriptive articles caused the suspension of the undertaking. He contributed to the "National Era" a series of articles on "Illinois" and to the "Illinois Journal" at Springfield a series on "Incidents of Illinois." He also published several pamphlets, and contributed constantly to the columns of the "Western Watchman," the "Christian Review," the "Christian Repository" and other papers.

On Nov. 18, 1852, the old Rock Spring Seminary was burned, and with it a large part of Mr. Peck's library. It was a serious calamity. Some valuable books were saved, but, as he says in his journal, "an important branch of my labor for more than thirty years is wholly lost. My collection of files of papers, periodicals and other pamphlets, amounting to several thousand volumes, mostly unbound but carefully filed, together with much other matter which I had intended for some public in-

stitution to be preserved for generations to come—these can never be replaced . . . I can only say, the will of the Lord be done.” The loss was irreparable, yet it is characteristic of the man that he gave no time to repining but sought in every way to replace the books and even the manuscript records which he valued above silver or gold. This in many cases was impossible, for the writers of these histories and reminiscences of early Illinois and Missouri, prepared at his urgent request, and constituting a large part of his collection, had passed away.

In addition to his preaching and evangelistic efforts, his correspondence, and his literary work, he was frequently invited to deliver addresses, and he seldom refused until the bondage of severe illness prevented. He spoke frequently on home and foreign missions; prepared a course of sermons or addressess on revivals; gave a series of lectures on “Aboriginal Missions,” delivered an oration at the Shurtleff College Commencement on the “Life and Character of Dr. Benjamin Shurtleff;” and at the Commencement of Georgetown College on “Elements of Western Character,” and spoke at Forefather’s Day in St. Louis on “The North, the South and the West.” These are only a few of the many engagements which he filled. Not many of them took him far from Rock Spring, and it is noticeable that in these later years he became very easily wearied and seldom journeyed far from his home.

There was one exception to this new habit of his life, however, and that was his last visit to the Eastern States. He set forth in April, 1852, and was absent nearly four months. He attended the annual meeting of the Publication Society in Philadelphia; and, there, with his ancient zeal for bringing to pass new organizations, he submitted a plan for the constitution of a Baptist Historical Society, which was adopted and its provisions put into effect. He was present at the Baptist Anniversaries in Albany and the interdenominational May Meetings in Boston. He was the guest of President Sparks of Harvard University at the Commencement of that institution. Various publication societies, book publishers and individuals,

having heard of the burning of his library, made generous donations of historical and other material, to supply in part his great loss. His interviews with old and cherished friends in the cities through which he passed, were a source of delight to him.

In his latter years, being at home the most of the time, he who had gone forth so often and so gallantly to bear blessings to others, loved to summon other men to his own hearth-stone. Many of the eminent ministers and denominational leaders of the day were guests at Rock Spring. During his whole career he had been an ardent friend and helper of young pastors. His words of advice were very frank and sometimes brusque and blunt, but they were always suggestive and stimulating.

The following quaint narrative of a meeting at his residence, written by one of the ministers who was present, affords a pleasant picture of the patriarch in the midst of his friends: "Rock Spring is the home, and for many years has been the center of influence of the venerable author of the *Emigrant's Guide and Gazetteer of Illinois*; the man whose publications and correspondence have led more settlers into this State than any other ten men. Who need to be told that this is the Rev. J. M. Peck! We should love to draw aside the veil, just a little, from this domestic scene. It proves that he who has shared the hospitality of so many families in all parts of our country, is as willing to exercise as to accept it.

"See his cheerful helpmate, contenting herself as best she may to abide at home and assiduously care for the welfare of the family and guests, having never revisited her native New England since her first departure in 1817. Nor can you fail to notice that daughter Mary, with the father's energy, and the mother's quietness: how steady, noiseless, and efficient are all her movements! and to her, in no small degree, are owing the comfort and happiness which always smile around that dwelling. Larger in its capacity to furnish good accommodations for the family and numerous guests, by day and by night, than any of its size we ever saw. is the home of this brother.

He had expected our coming, and knowing how very limited our stay must be, had arranged everything in the best order possible to fill up the day. Most of the morning was spent with him alone in his study. What accumulations of laborious carefulness and orderly accretions, during a long lifetime, here surround you! Near noon the neighboring ministers, for a dozen or twenty miles around, begin to arrive. After some time spent in introductions and mutual greetings, dinner being over, a goodly-sized congregation met in the Rock Spring Seminary Building of former years, now only used as a chapel. After praise and prayer and preaching, some of us strolled over the more interesting localities, bathed in the effluents of the spring, and drank of its pure waters.

"After tea, all assembled in the largest room, our host acting as moderator of the meeting; and from each in turn, beginning with the eldest, some recital was given of the way in which the Lord had led them in the wilderness, lo, these many years! Thus we heard in succession from Darrow and Ross and the Lemens (who witnessed the first baptism in this territory in 1794, and the first Baptist Association formed in 1807), from Pulliam and Taylor, from Rogers and Dawson and the younger Ross, and some others. Most of these were inadequately-sustained ministers, but loved the cause apparently in proportion to the sacrifices they had made for it.

"In private, and in various incidental ways, it was gratifying to see the high regard which they all felt for Brother Peck. 'He has been faithful to us in helping to correct our faults, and to improve our minds and hearts and we thank him for it,' was the common sentiment. At a late hour that evening we prayed and sang and wept and rejoiced together; near midnight retired to rest, and when all were comfortably sleeping around, we long lay in wakeful musings, thinking over the scene which we shall never witness again."

Toward the close of the year 1856 he met with a most severe bereavement in the death of his wife. In a noble tribute to her memory he says that had she not possessed the principles

which controlled her life, and been the wise, prudent, self-denying head and governor of the family that she was, he "could not have made half the sacrifices and performed half the services kind friends have attributed to me."

In June, 1857, the old man, worn and feeble, summoned strength sufficient to attend the Commencement at Shurtleff College, and to take part in the sessions of the Board of Trustees. In July he went by steamer from St. Louis to Galena, and visited his children in Iowa, returning by way of Chicago, whence he was a guest of Mayor Boone and met many friends. On October 31st he writes in his journal: "This is my birthday, and I am 68 years old. It is hardly possible for me to live to see another anniversary. My sole dependence is on the mercy and grace of God. O Lord, unto thy hands I commit my spirit."

His last days were filled with suffering. On February 16th, 1858, he writes that President Read of Shurtleff College and Hon. Cyrus Edwards visited him in his home. He adds: "Discussed college matters very fully. The conversation was cheerful and exhilarating, and we enjoyed ourselves greatly." On the 28th of February he dressed himself and conducted family worship, reading three verses from the Bible and offering a short prayer. After this he was unable to leave his bed.

On Sunday, March 14, his old friend Rev. W. F. Boyakin, who was destined to survive him for more than thirty years, talked with him for some time. To him he said: "Only Christ is my Saviour, my whole dependence." This phrase expressed the secret of his entire life. The same evening, at a quarter before nine, he died. His last words were a benediction upon each member of his family, who stood about his bed. Two days later he was buried. The funeral sermon was preached by his friend of forty years, Rev. James Lemen, from the text: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." So ended the glorious life of "The Old Pioneer."



## CHAPTER XIV

### *The Man and His Work*

THE career of John Mason Peck was well ordered, controlled in all things by elevating principles of righteousness, fruitful beyond measure in its issues.

To trust with simple heart in the Eternal Goodness; to walk in fellowship with Jesus Christ and see with His eyes the world-need; to interpret truth in terms of life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; to eliminate the note of self; to go forth eagerly to serve and rescue men; to form deep convictions in the quiet haunts of prayer and utter them boldly in the temple and in the market-place; to plan widely and wisely in the establishment of the kingdom of the Son of God; to accept rebuffs with equanimity and welcome opposition as a challenge to strength; to pour forth ceaselessly the treasures of brain and heart that the common life may be enriched: to do this is to become a higher person, a man after God's own heart. The character of the man whose story has been told in these pages may be truthfully described by such words.

Often the larger virtues which a soul possesses are more or less obscured by superficial flaws or roughnesses. Mr. Peck was always hearty and friendly but he was singularly direct and even abrupt in his manner, and his frankness of speech was sometimes more disconcerting than charming. Although born in the East he was a typical Son of the West. His breeziness and vigor, his absence of dignified reserve, his abounding joy in life, his intensity of faith and virility in action, were akin to the spirit of the rolling prairies and the mighty rivers of the New West, where his powers grew to their maturity.

He believed in organization as the key to efficiency. He organized individual Bible societies, temperance societies, Sun-



day schools, churches. He brought these together, forming larger groups that were county-wide and state-wide. His influence was chiefly instrumental in the formation of three great national bodies, the American Baptist Home Mission Society, the American Baptist Publication Society and the Baptist Historical Society. He superintended, during many years, the ministry and work of a large company of missionary-pastors and evangelists.

The extent of his correspondence, his literary labors, his service to the interests of public welfare, and his effective promotion of the cause of common-school education have already been indicated. He not only founded the College at Alton, but, by his resolute action in a moment of peril, he redeemed its fortunes, while by his "discovery" of Dr. Shurtleff he secured its future.

He knew little about technical scholarship, but he had a mind greedy for knowledge. He taught men to think, and he advocated, from one end of his broad field of action to the other, the necessity for training, education, a thorough mental discipline and equipment for the tasks of life. His own attainments, in spite of the handicap of a meagre school-experience, were recognized by the oldest and most famous of American colleges, when Harvard University conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1851.

He was profoundly attached to his friends, and especially to the dear ones in his own home. The constant references in his journal attest the truth of this statement. They portray his ceaseless solicitude for the members of the family-circle, from whom the demands of his calling forced him to be absent so much of his time. They chronicle his joy and gratitude when, from time to time, his children were led to confess their faith in Christ. In his journeys abroad he went out of his way, times without number, to visit old friends and spend an hour or a day in happy converse with them. This was really the only recreation that he ever allowed himself, and this mode of recrea-

tion was always a source of inspiration and bulwarked his heart with new courage for his exhausting tasks.

The secret of his abundantly successful life, his prolific labors, his subordination of all personal interests to the needs of others, was to be found in the fact that the spirit of Christ dwelt in him. The Saviour of men had conquered the citadel of his soul. His consuming passion was to do Christ's will in the world, to establish His Kingdom in the midst of the growing life of the West.

He was a builder of men and of institutions. He set the corner stones of truth and righteousness in the fabric of a new civilization. He toiled in the service of the Master-builder. So he built for eternity; and his work abides.

# INDEX

African Church, St. Louis....	102	Female Mite Societies.....	41
Alton Seminary .....	84	Fox River Association.....	90
Amenia, Church in.....	13	Furman, Dr. ....	21
Amer. Baptist Historical So-			
ciety .....	104, 109	German Baptist Mission.....	102
Amer. Baptist Home Mission		Gonig, Dr. J.....	73, 83, 85
Society.....	75, 87, 89, 90, 107	Greene, T. P.....	69
American Baptist Missionary		"Guide to Emigrants".....	80, 86, 105
Union .....	9, 97		
Amer. Bapt. Publication So-		Hamilton, Students at.....	73
ciety.....	93, 96, 104, 109	Harvard University .....	104, 109
Amer. Bible Society....	38, 60, 77	Hinton, I. T.....	90, 96
Amer. Sunday School Union			
41, 52, 60, 77		Illinois .....	27, 81, 103
"Annals of the West".....	103	Illinois Association.....	35, 50, 92
Anniversaries, Baptist.....	9, 96, 104	Illionis Bapt. Education So-	
Anti-Mission Influences, 30,		ciety .....	86
48, 66, 87		Illinois Sunday School Union	78
		India, Missions in.....	14, 20, 43
Babcock, Dr. R.....	50, 75		
"Banner and Pioneer".....	89, 95	Journeys, Missionary, 27 ff.,	
Baptism, First, in St. Louis..	27	33 ff., 57, 72, 75, 78, 89	
"Bapt. Missionary Magazine"	43, 82	Judson, Adoniram .....	9, 20
Belleville, Church at.....	91, 102		
Bethel Association .....	34	Kentucky, Tours in.....	89
Bethel Church .....	102		
Bible Distribution .....	52	Lemen, James.....	66, 106, 107
Boone, Daniel.....	38, 80, 103	Lexington, Ky., Church in....	91
Boone, Mayor .....	105	Liberty, Mo. ....	57
Boone's Lick .....	35, 38	Library, Burned .....	103
Boyakin, W. F.....	107	Litchfield, Conn....	10, 12, 22, 60
Bradley, Joshua .....	68	Loomis, Hubbel .....	84
		Louisville, Ky.....	89, 91, 94
Chicago .....	71, 90, 107		
Cincinnati .....	59, 98	Marks, Judge .....	50
Circuit Preaching .....	30, 61, 72	Mass. Bapt. Convention.....	94
Coats, William .....	39	Mass. Baptist Missionary So-	
Colonization Society .....	59, 77	ciety .....	47, 53, 61, 74
Columbian College .....	43, 60	McCoy, William .....	45
Covington, Ky. ....	102	Mercer, Jesse .....	22, 48
Craig, James .....	42	Mission Policies .....	44, 53
		Mississippi River....	25, 27, 84, 98
Eastern States, Visits to..	59,	Missouri Bible Society.....	38
85, 93, 104			
Edwards, Gov.....	79	New Durham Church.....	11
Edwards, Hon. C.....	107	New England Traits.....	62

Northern Bapt. Education Society .....	94	Rock Spring Church....	48, 50, 88
Parker, Daniel .....	48	Rock Spring Seminary, 66, 103, 106	
Pattison, R. E.....	92	Russell, John .....	68
Peck, J. M.: Birth, 10; Conversion, 10; Marriage, 11; Removal to N. Y. State, 11; Baptism, 11; Pastor at Catskill, 12; Ordination, 13; at Amenia, 13; Student Days, 17 ff.; Appointment to West, 21; Arrival in St. Louis, 25; First Visit to Illinois, 27; Pioneer Journeys, 28 ff.; Removal to St. Charles, 42; to Rock Spring, 47; Visits Eastern States, 59; Establishes Seminary, 66; Newspaper, 68; Varied Labors, 77; Literary Work, 80, 103; Pastor at Rock Spring, 88; at Belleville, 91; at St. Louis, 91; at Covington, 102; Removal to Louisville, 92; Secretary of Publication Society, 96; Later Years, 101 ff.; Death, 107; Character .....	108	Schools, in West....	28, 33, 35, 59
Peck, Mrs. J. M....	11, 24, 49, 105, 106	Shawneetown .....	24, 64
Pioneer Conditions....	26, 29, 31, 36, 57	Shurtleff College.....	84, 104, 107
Pioneer of the Valley of the Mississippi .....	69, 77 86	Shurtleff, Dr. B.....	85, 104
Pulliam, James .....	66, 106	"Squatters" .....	31, 36
Religious Journalism.....	68, 86	Staughton, William..	17, 19, 22, 60
Revivalism .....	54	St. Charles Academy.....	42, 46
Rice, Luther .....	13, 18, 60	Steamer, Wreck of.....	98
Rock Spring, 47, 59, 69, 86, 98, 102, 105		St. Louis, in 1817.....	25
		St. Louis Church..	27, 45, 50, 63, 102
		Sunday Schools...	18, 27, 40, 52, 56
		Temperance: Illinois Society, 78; Advocacy of.....	82
		Theological Instruction ....	19, 61
		Triennial Convention..	9, 20, 43, 60 74
		United Society .....	34, 37
		Upper Alton .....	84, 86
		Welch, J. E....	17, 21, 24, 34, 39, 44, 50
		West, Growth of the..	71, 80, 89, 101
		Western Baptist Educational Association .....	85
		Western Baptist Publication Society .....	92
		Western Baptists, Convention of .....	91, 92
		Western Mission: Proposed, 15; Established, 20; Closed.	43
		Western Mission Academy, 27,	42, 46
		"Western Pioneer" .....	86
		Williams, Lewis .....	39, 72

Home Mission Harvests  
of a  
Hundred Years

---

BY  
LEMUEL CALL BARNES, D.D.





## HOME MISSION HARVESTS OF A HUNDRED YEARS

*Address by L. C. Barnes at Cleveland, Ohio, May 17, 1917, the exact centennial anniversary of the appointment of John M. Peck as Western Missionary by the Triennial Convention.—These remarks were preceded by an address of Dr. A. K. de Blois concerning Peck, the Pioneer.*

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

Psalm 126, 6.

WHEN the one-horse wagon of John Mason Peck crept westward thru the forest trails of Ohio, there were but two Baptists, Moses White and his wife, living in the raw hamlet of Cleveland. Today there are twelve thousand members in the 27 Baptist churches of this noble city.

That multiplication is typical of the Home Mission Harvests of a Hundred Years in the whole country from the Ohio River to the Pacific Ocean. That was the West of Peck's day. So it must be the West of our thought tonight.

The harvests have been manifold. They cannot be pictured or even tabulated in twenty minutes.

Whole fields of golden grain must be merely mentioned—for example, educational institutions created, scores of them—meeting-houses built, thousands of them—Sunday-schools organized, tens of thousands of them—Christian literature distributed, countless millions of pages.

We must concentrate attention on only three or four sheaves out of a vast harvest—a sheaf of Americanism, a sheaf of enlistment, a sheaf of munitions and a sheaf of personnel.

## *I. A Sheaf of Sure Americanism.*

The hundred years of Home Missions have yielded a hundredfold harvest of assured Americanism. They have carried the democracy of Rhode Island clear across the continent. That is the democracy which today is in process of transforming the whole world.

Home missions have done more than anything else, unless it be the public schools, to eliminate from American life the hyphen-peril. To start with, Celt and Anglo-Saxon, Welsh and English Baptists ran together in the foundations of our denomination. During the century people of more than thirty European tongues have been assimilated by Baptist home missions. Seventy-eight thousand of them are now in our foreign-speaking churches—probably as many more in the English-speaking churches.

The hyphen, as a source of anxiety, has been dissolved in the baptistry. In many cases of bleeding sensibilities the cost of American loyalty makes it a sacrificial, a holy thing. Peck organized a German Baptist church in St. Louis. Thirty-one thousand German Baptists, thru their representatives assembled four weeks ago, said this—and it will go down the centuries as one of the memorable declarations of history:

“WHEREAS, the exigencies of the present war-situation seem to make a statement on our part desirable, and

“WHEREAS, such an expression on our part—notwithstanding the often tested loyalty of the German-Americans in the past history of our country—does not seem to be superfluous or out of place; therefore be it

“RESOLVED, that we, the General Mission Board of the German Baptist Churches in the United States, assembled in executive session in Chicago, Illinois, speaking as representatives of our churches, hereby re-

affirm our unswerving loyalty to our Government, and be it further

“RESOLVED, that we declare ourselves ready to open our churches for any work which may be asked of us in the interest of our country and which conforms to the spirit and ideals of the Christian religion.”

Home missions have been creating international ties with men of Asiatic as well as European blood.

Millions, too, of African ancestry have been lifted into light by home missions. Ten million dollars of Northern Baptist money and hundreds of far more precious lives have had much to do in lifting the level of literacy from ten per cent. to over seventy per cent. of the entire Negro population.

Not only people of European, Asiatic and African extraction but also more than a dozen tribes of aboriginal Americans are being Americanized in the highest sense by our Home Missions.

Eighty-five years ago, when the American Baptist Home Mission Society was organized, its charter required it “to promote the preaching of the Gospel in North America”—the whole continent. Twenty-five million inhabitants of North America live south of the Rio Grande. Among these Latin Americans only a beginning has been made—a sufficient beginning to show that we can meet their greatest need. Our democratic gospel message and tuition can help them as nothing else can do, to be splendid neighbors in Americanism.

## *II. A Sheaf of Voluntary Enlistment*

The hundred years of Home Missions have yielded more than a hundredfold harvest of voluntary enlistment in the army of the Lord.

In 1817 there were only 6,382 Baptist church members west of the Ohio River; there are now 763,467, one hundred and twenty times the number that we had then. More than

one-half of the entire membership of our Convention is now west of the Ohio River.

One hundred years ago there were only 77,406 members in all our churches in what is now the territory of the whole Northern Baptist Convention. Now there are many more than that number in each one of the four States which were on the frontier when home missions began—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri. There are nearly three times that number now in Missouri alone, the State where Peck's undertaking started.



A hint of the progress of the harvesting can be gained by a study of the advancing center of activity. One hundred years ago the geographical center of the entire Northern Baptist church membership was a hundred miles north of New York City. By a curious coincidence, the exact center then fell at the village of Catskill, N. Y., and it was in the Baptist church of Catskill that John M. Peck had just been ordained. Today the center is west of where you now are sitting. To be exact,

it is 34 miles northwest of Lima, Ohio. It has moved 560 miles. At the same rate of progress, in another hundred years it will be near Omaha, Nebraska.

If all denominational headquarters were to be centered at the center of our membership today and tomorrow, it would be somewhere between Cleveland and Chicago. The seaboard Baptists—both Atlantic and Pacific—what a time they would have holding an even scale between the towns clamoring for headquarters.

In 1817 there was no Baptist college or seminary west of the Ohio River. There are almost twice as many students in the eighteen Baptist colleges west of the Ohio now as there were church members in that area then. We now have in theological seminaries west of the Ohio 470 students, four times as many as the entire number of Baptist ministers in the West at that time.

The full record of the Harvest of souls enlisted exists only in heaven. But careful computation shows that on earth about three million names have been on our western church rolls. They were all volunteers. There was not a conscript among them. If we counted as some do, we could claim millions more. But every one of these three millions was enrolled by his own volition. They stand to the credit of one hundred years of work in the West. Much of the seed for this vast harvest was sown by the West itself, and much of it by the East to be garnered in the West. We are all bound together in one bundle of divine life.

From the first day until now, the keynote of home missions has been evangelism. It was the chief work of the first missionary. Now that one has become a thousand it is still the central business of every missionary. With all the century's changes in the outward equipment of human life and with all the century's changes in the intellectual vocabulary of human thought, there is no change in the vital center of endeavor—the winning of individual souls into warm, life-commanding allegiance to Jesus Christ. The pivotal work of home mis-

sions is the same all the way from Peck the Pioneer to Stilwell the Superintendent of Evangelism.

In the eighty-five years since the Home Mission Society was organized, its missionaries alone have baptized more than 300,000 people, *i. e.*, one-fifth of all who have been baptized in all our churches during the whole century in the entire country west of the Ohio. In that country one million seven hundred thousand people (1,774,287) have been lifted in the resurrection emblem of enlistment under the banner of our Lord.

### *III. A Sheaf of Consecrated Resources*

The hundred years of Home Missions has yielded vastly more than hundredfold harvest of consecrated Resources.

Records such as exist indicate that in the West which Peck opened up denominationally and in the newer West beyond his farthest West, our churches have contributed to church support and benevolent objects not less than seventy-five million dollars.

A significant feature of the benevolence generated by home missions is the fact that the Baptist churches on the western slope of the continent give to missions at home and abroad more than twice as much per member as the eastern churches. This is done, too, at a time when they have to be creating roads, schools, and every facility of modern life, and while they are paying large interest to eastern capital. Those churches were created by Home Missions and they are true to the holy spirit of their creator.

In the midland region between the Mississippi and the Rockies, the actual giving per member is about the same as east of the Mississippi. Omitting a few very large personal gifts in the East, however, the midland record would stand relatively considerably higher than the eastern per member.

Only a fraction of what is given by church people appears on the treasurer's books. Unmeasured streams of benevolence have been refreshing the earth. Our churches have been irriga-



tion channels transforming deserts into gardens of God, not only in the homeland but around the whole globe. The records of our Foreign Mission Societies show \$6,861,174.26 from churches and individuals west of the Ohio River. Apparent omissions in the records and well-known items which did not pass thru the societies' treasuries make it clear that our western Baptist



churches have contributed more than seven million dollars to foreign missions.

The geographical center of foreign mission giving at the present time is a little west of the geographical center of mem-

bership. The latter, as we saw, is in western Ohio, while the former is at Fort Wayne, Indiana. The geographical center of home mission giving and the geographical center of all benevolences combined are both near Defiance, Ohio.

But the harvest of Resources is not mechanical, it is vitalizing. It is the seed-corn of the kingdom.

In order to express the spirit of benevolence and make it effective, our home mission churches have organized themselves by States and districts so that we now have in the West 328 Associations and 24 State Conventions. Few of the Associations, not one of the Conventions, existed when Peck began his work. These organisms of good-will stand for the kingdom of heaven on earth. They powerfully tend to make it a reality. They are incarnations of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done"—not Thy will be endured, but Thy will be achieved.

Still larger incarnations of that prayer are the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the women's home and foreign mission societies of the West. Peck was diligent in organizing "female mite societies." These mite societies became mighty societies. He organized also Bible societies far and wide. Put that with his publishing of books and of the first Baptist periodical in a region where there are now twenty-one—no wonder that late in life he became for three years the General Secretary of the American Baptist Publication Society. But his chief contribution to the organic life of the denomination was by inspiring the plan and in cooperation with Jonathan Going of Worcester, Mass., actually drawing up the plan which created the American Baptist Home Mission Society. That in turn has been the fostering mother of the organic life of the denomination in the West.

Greater than all the millions of dollars—more than twenty millions—which the Home Mission Society has poured into the church life of the West, has been its service in mobilizing and marchalling the forces of the kingdom of heaven in the immense country from the Ohio to the Golden Gate.

#### *IV. A Sheaf of Ministry to Humanity*

The hundred years of Home Missions have yielded a hundredfold harvest of personal ministration to human welfare.

Infinitely more vital than the numbers enlisted and the benevolence recorded has been the personality devoted. One of the most impressive utterances in our history was made years ago by the distinguished Cleveland layman, Mr. John D. Rockefeller, at the dedication of a building which he had contributed to one of the ministerial training schools of the denomination. He said that his part in giving money was as nothing compared with the lives which were being laid on that altar.

I have tried to get together a list of the members of our churches in the West who have rendered eminent service in making the nation what it is, our ministers to humanity—not only the preaching ministers, but equally the ministers in other lines of great constructive service—judges in the courts of justice, legislators in the States and in the nation, administrators in cities, commanders of armies, educators in schools and colleges, writers of books and editors of periodicals, captains in industrial development and organization, including the organization of labor, leaders in the fundamental business of agriculture, great railroad men and tradesmen, distributors of the necessities of life and the necessities of modern life. It has been impossible to get sufficient returns to tabulate. But the statements, only fragmentary, which have come in from the 22 States west of the Ohio River show an array of names to make every Baptist heart throb with gratitude to God for what he has called and empowered our fathers and brethren to do in building commonwealths, the nation and the whole republic of God. A Baptist minister was the pastor of the first church of any kind northwest of the Ohio River. He bore the common-folks name John Smith. But his services in the common weal were so distinctive that his fellow-pioneers made him a member of the convention to draft a constitution for the State of Ohio.

The new commonwealth sent him as one of its first senators to the Congress of the United States.

Dr. A. L. Vail has lately unearthed for us the fact, making it incontestable on the highest type of evidence, that John M. Peck did more than any other one man in preventing Illinois from becoming a slave State and so in turning the whole tide of American history. What would God have to say in the Day of Judgment if that Baptist missionary had neglected to form the political leagues thru Illinois which eliminated the slavery plank from that State—the State which was afterward to furnish Abraham Lincoln, a Baptist mother's son, to complete the work for the whole nation?

If it were possible to make a list of eminent public servants of all kinds and to print it in letters dusted with gold, everyone knows that still other and immeasurably larger lists of the obscure members of our churches who have spent their lives in personal devotion to the highest ideals ought to be made and printed with dust of diamonds.

In one of the many lines of large ministry it is possible to make a fairly complete list, that of the men and women who have been raised up and sent abroad in the last hundred years by the churches west of the Ohio River—the missionaries to foreign lands. The records at the Missionary Rooms in Boston show 400 of them—"the four hundred." That is, about one-fourth of all who have been sent during the century. The ratio of course is increasing. In the last 25 years more than one-third of all who have gone have gone from the West. Four hundred foreign missionaries out of our churches in the West, backed up by seven million dollars for foreign missions out of the same churches, make one thing certain: When the Triennial Convention one hundred years ago today sent John M. Peck to be the pioneer home missionary, it did the most essential thing that it could do toward the redemption of other continents as well as of our own. It was the home mission experience of his father which fired the young heart of Adoniram Judson. It was the Massachusetts Baptist home missionary society which

prepared the way for the American Baptist foreign mission society. It is in the western churches which have been themselves created by the home mission spirit, that the missionary spirit ought to abound. For eighty-five of the hundred years we have had the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and it has explicitly required the churches which it fosters to give themselves to foreign missions.

Such has been the ministry of the West to the Far East. There are no available records of its ministry to the near East. That also has been very great. Ten years ago in a Massachusetts city of over one hundred thousand population, having many strong evangelical churches, most of the pastors were from the West. The like is true in many an eastern city and in not a few country places, to say nothing of eastern college and seminary faculties. As to ministerial students, Newton, Crozer, Colgate and Rochester in the last ten years have drawn nearly four hundred (396) of their students from the West, in some cases more than half of their total enrollment. In some of the eastern theological seminaries the chief source of students has been the West.

The first full century of Home Missions conducted by our whole denomination will ever be memorable because of the splendid personalities developed and devoted. To the end of time no century of endeavor can be forgotten which has been initiated and climaxed by the holy ministry of two such men as John M. Peck and Henry L. Morehouse.

In the direct service of Home Missions seventy-eight of the one hundred years have been filled with the ministry of these two transcendent personalities.

Races benefited, souls enlisted, means consecrated, social service rendered—let these four sheaves, tho so inadequately bound and shocked, stand as emblems of the immeasurable Harvests of a Hundred Years.

We have taken a few minutes to glance at the past, not for the pleasure of the vision of glorious deeds nor even mainly out of loving gratitude for our inheritance, but chiefly that we



might plunge into the future with reinforced courage and reinvigorated wills. Three things are vital if we are to build worthily on the foundations which have been laid—Intensive Cultivation, Eager Cooperation and Divine Thrust.

### 1. *Intensive Cultivation*

The State Administrators in ten of the western States have recently written me concerning 277 fields in which there is no other church but ours. Let the Home Mission forces select some fields in each State to serve like model farms in government agriculture. Let us pour into these places skill—the highest, divinest skill available—and give them the equipment, everything essential to the best spiritual tillage. Let us make these chosen spots so fertile, blooming and fragrant that they will attract imitators over a wide area. If we could make one little town or countryside all that it ought to be, it would do more for the kingdom of heaven on earth at large than could be done by no end of scattered, feeble, semi-futile undertakings. When the Indian natives of this country wanted better crops they moved to a new spot. Former generations of white men have done much the same, running ever to new fields. That is the savage and the semi-civilized way of doing. But the hour has come for culture, the increase of productiveness, not by racing for fresh fields, but by intensive cultivation of the fields of our fathers. This is true in city as well as country. At the metropolis of the nation, for example, in a single group of contiguous blocks there are 60,000 people without a single evangelical church; in another destitute area more than 100,000 people live. Let strategic points in all the States of the Union, both city and country, be selected and all the force of the denomination brought to bear in making them radiating centers of divine community life and of wide spiritual contagion.

### 2. *Eager Cooperation*

Closer cooperation with ourselves is the brilliant development of the hour—the American Baptist Home Mission Society



with the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, the Home Mission Society with the Publication Society, the Home Mission Society with State Conventions, all moving as one force, and having, if not complete organic union, at least firmly interlocking directorates. There is no brighter page in American church history than the page which records the coming of Baptists and Free Baptists into intimately close cooperative union.

Cooperation with all evangelical forces is the habit of the denomination. The destitution is too great and the future developments are too immense to permit the waste of a single ounce of energy in competition with any people of God who proclaim the gospel with unmistakable clearness.

We may well imbibe the spirit of John M. Peck, the ruggedest of Baptists, when he formed the first religious and philanthropic organization west of the Mississippi River, making it an interdenominational society "to aid in spreading the gospel and in promoting common schools in the western part of America."

The immense tasks of Home Missions are in the future. Competent students of population possibilities and tendencies figure that, when all the available soil and water for irrigation are in use, eight times the present population can be sustained by the country east of the Missouri River, and twenty times the present population in the first tier of States west of that river, while twenty-eight times the present population can be sustained by the real West which lies beyond that. Methods of agriculture now known, therefore, would sustain one billion people in continental United States. There are good reasons for expecting that this one thousand million population will occupy our country no further in the future from this hour than we are tonight past the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock. The Home Mission enterprise has barely begun; its great undertakings lie before us. The issue can be glorious and adequate only if the forces are all mobilized. Whatever the allies may have done in the past, in the future the wickedest

thing in God's world would be for the allies to contend against each other.

The alliance of our country with many other nations to-day does not diminish our Americanism. It is rather intensified as it never was before. The same is true of Baptist cooperation with other denominations. There never was a time when we felt called upon so imperatively as now to insist that religion is a matter of personal loyalty to God. No phase of it can be performed by proxy. Religion is altogether an affair of personality and not of ceremony. It is an affair only of God-begotten personality and not of man-made formularies of any kind, ritual, intellectual or ecclesiastical.

Our brethren of other names need the contribution which alliance with us brings to the common cause. Some of them need it desperately.

### 3. *Divine Thrust*

When our Lord commissioned the twelve, and a year later the seventy, he taught them to plead for divine thrust in the work—"Pray the Lord that he *send forth*." Adequate intensiveness in cultivation and eagerness in cooperation are possible only if there be superhuman spirit in the undertaking. Workers with all there is in them must be at work, not for their own sakes but for Christ's sake and the sake of humanity.

Too many men have crawled into place on their own stomachs, instead of being thrust into work by the omnipotent Spirit. We must pray that men be thrust into work instead of seeking situations. At the anniversaries years ago, a leader said that too many men in his part of the country were looking for situations with emphasis on the sit. In a Southwestern political convention a great banner was stretched across the front of the hall having on one end a picture of a jack rabbit sitting on his haunches, with his eyes closed, fore-paws drooping, in obvious sleep. At the other end was the picture of a jack rabbit stretching over the sod, evidently going at 30 or 40 miles an

hour. Between the two pictures was the legend, "It is better to git up and git than to sit up and sit." The vernacular phrasing may be pardoned, because it pithily embodies one of the sublime ideals of Christianity. The little word which points the climax of the gospel story is the word "go." The ideal of the world's most popular religions next to Christianity is quiescence. That is the climax of the religions of India. The final command of the holy religion of Jesus Christ is "go." A keen feeling of commission, being divinely sent, omnipotently thrust into the field, is indispensable in winning North America for Christ.

The "go" of the gospel has behind it the awful thrust of Gethsemane and Calvary. Never before since that day has the commission to Christianize the nations been underscored with such terrific emphasis as at the present hour. We know not, we care not, in what kind of ink the first recorder of "the great commission" dipped his pen. He had a Christ-inspired largeness of vision. His words today stand lurid along the whole horizon, stretching up out of blood-red trenches till they reach flaming aeroplanes in the sky. It is nations, whole nations, which must be disciplined. For nearly nineteen hundred years it has been assumed sufficient to get souls separately right. We now see that they must be made right in their relationship—in all their wide relationships, national and international. We see, too, that essential to all the other relationships are economic relationships. Farms and factories are as vital as armies and parliaments. The whole fabric and every fiber of the nation must be brought under the spell of Jesus Christ.

The hour in the world's history when the chief contention of Baptists thru the ages, the contention for liberty and democracy, is coming to its own thruout the whole world, is the hour for us to rise as never before on the wings of faith and determination. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He thrust forth laborers into His harvest."

Humanity is in the very presence of eternity. No serious-minded man doubts that today. Our Home Mission Cause, our

whole denomination, is under the hush of a great bereavement. Seldom have such great power of thought and such great power of feeling been so intimately united as they were in Henry L. Morehouse—a great head and a great heart yoked together in mighty, life-long work. The embodiment of divine energy in consecrated personality has been suddenly translated.

From every worker's heart leaps the cry: "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

To him more than to any other man—more than to any other ten men—have been due harvests which have been garnered from the sowing of the pioneers. Let me close the record by quoting what were probably the last words which he ever wrote on the theme which had enthralled his young manhood and had absorbed all his ripening years to the end. The precious words are from a long personal letter received from him only a few days before his death:

"Impress upon our people the importance of making this nation more thoroly Christian. As we are striving to produce larger crops this year for the hungry millions of the world, so our energies should be directed to greater activity in Christian undertakings to make America the most potent power possible for the evangelization of the world."

This is our challenge for a hundred years to come—  
"MAKE AMERICA THE MOST POTENT POWER POSSIBLE FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE WORLD."

# APPENDIX

## CENTENNIAL DATA

### 1817-1917

Ascertained for L. C. Barnes by Arthur Warren Smith, "Specialist in  
Statistics and Research."

*(Small numerals refer to Notes beginning on page 133)*

#### I.—ENTIRE FIELD

For the whole territory now comprised in the Northern Baptist Convention<sup>1</sup>:

Membership .....	1817.....	77,406
" .....	1917.....	1,437,735
Baptisms .....	1817.....	6,229
" .....	1917.....	82,794
" .....	1817 to 1917.....	3,251,844 <sup>2</sup>
Meeting-houses .....	1817.....	500
" .....	1917.....	9,781
Value of Meeting-houses.....	1817.....	\$450,000
" " " .....	1917.....	101,648,937

Total Beneficence—

(a) 1870 to 1916.....	\$125,539,024	
(b) 1816 to 1869.....	7,817,890	
	<hr/>	\$133,356,914 <sup>3</sup>

#### II.—WESTERN FIELD

For Northern Baptist Convention Territory west of the Ohio River, i. e., west  
of Atlantic States:

Baptist Colleges, 1917.....	18
Students in Baptist Colleges, 1917.....	12,593
Academies, 1917.....	8
Students in Baptist Academies, 1917.....	1,032
Baptist Theological Seminaries, 1917.....	5
Students in our western Theological Seminaries, 1917.....	470
Students from the West in eastern Seminaries, 1906 to 1916....	396 <sup>4</sup>
Number in faculties of Colleges, 1917.....	732
Number in faculties of Academies, 1917.....	108
Number in faculties of Seminaries, 1917.....	49
Baptist Journals, 1917.....	21
Foreign Missionaries.....	423 <sup>5</sup>
Contributions for Foreign Missions, 1816 to 1916.....	\$6,861,174.26 <sup>6</sup>
Baptisms, 1816 to 1916.....	1,774,287

### III.—GEOGRAPHICAL CENTERS<sup>7</sup>

Within Northern Baptist Convention.

Ascertained on the principles used by the U. S. Census Bureau in determining geographical center of population

Item	Latitude	Longitude	Location	Nearst Large Town	Nearst Baptist Church
Membership—1817 .....	42° 8' 53"	73° 47' 56"	Columbia Co., N. Y. <sup>s</sup>	Albany, 30 m.	Catskill
1917 .....	40° 55' 41"	84° 41' 24"	Van Wert Co., Ohio.	Lima, 34 m.	Haviland
Total Beneficence <sup>8</sup> —1817 .....	41° 50' 36"	73° 29' 10"	Litchfield Co., Conn.	Litchfield, 17 m.	Amenia
1917 .....	41° 11' 27"	84° 12' 0"	Henry Co., Ohio.	Defiance, 12 m.	Defiance
Foreign Beneficence—1817 .....	41° 51' 38"	73° 42'	Dutchess Co., N. Y.	Poughkeepsie, 15 m.	Amenia
1917 .....	41° 6' 1"	85° 5' 38"	Allen Co., Ind.	Fort Wayne, 5 m.	Fort Wayne
A. B. F. M. S. Beneficence—1917 .....	41° 10' 39"	86° 27' 4"	Marshall Co., Ind.	Plymouth, 12 m.	Jordan
Home Beneficence—1817 <sup>u</sup> .....	41° 47' 10"	73° 39'	Dutchess Co., N. Y.	Poughkeepsie, 13 m.	Amenia
1917 <sup>u</sup> .....	41° 8' 14"	86° 4' 2"	Kosciusko Co., Ind.	Rochester, 12 m.	Mentone
A. B. H. M. S. Beneficence—1917 .....	41° 12' 53"	83° 58' 48"	Henry Co., Ohio.	Defiance, 20 m.	Defiance



## NOTES

1.—The Northern Baptist Convention includes the following States: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, California, and one half of Missouri and of the District of Columbia.

2.—Baptist statistics in all the years even up to the present, exhibit two features to be taken into account: (a) Because some churches and whole associations in reports present only blanks, we know that there have been baptisms where no numbers are given. (b) Because for other churches "last year's report" is recorded in place of new data, we know that sometimes more baptisms have occurred than the number given. Our figures, built up very carefully on a scientific basis, are conservative and indicate the lowest possible number rather than the highest. While our church clerks fail to give complete data at the present day, in the early decades the numbers given represented a still smaller part of the results obtained. For example, a statement was made by Peck that he knew in a certain region a full thousand baptisms occurred. Reference to the statistics for that region and period do not give a quarter of that number. It is probable that in the hundred years the actual number of baptisms was not less than *four million*. The first ten years saw 76,299 as against the last ten just closing 690,905. The second decade had 109,227 against 514,646 for the ninth decade. It took twelve years to carry the yearly number above 10,000. The third carried it as high as 45,000. But a reaction held the figures between 15,000 and 30,000 until after the Civil War. Since then it has steadily risen until the past two years present 98,158 and 83,033. A few high spots are suggestive. In 1842-3, 35,495 baptisms occurred, reflecting the revivals under Knapp and Finney, which made a deep impression on Baptist churches. Then the revival of 1858 again lifted the average which had been running between 15,000 and 20,000 to 45,380, followed by the inertia created by Civil War conditions. But 1866 saw a rise to 42,397. After this they steadily rose by annual increases with a high point in 1894 to 73,204.

3.—This was calculated by overcoming peculiar statistical difficulties. Year books gave money items in different forms relatively reliable back to 1870. The period, 1816 to 1869, the following objects were figured from reports and other sources by careful comparisons and in the light of experience with such matters: American Baptist Missionary Union, 1816 to 1869; Home Mission Society, 1832 to 1869; Publication Society, 1826 to 1869; State Conventions (mostly since 1824), 1816 to 1869; Miscellaneous (mainly education), 1816 to 1869. Care was taken to make the figures producing (b) conservative, and they are perhaps a half million to a million too low.

4.—Students from the West attendant at four Eastern Seminaries, 1906 to 1916: Crozer, 31; Newton, 49; Colgate, 25; Rochester, 161; Rochester German Department, 130; Rochester total, 291; total, 396. In some cases this was more than 50 per cent. of the entire enrollment.

5.—Foreign missionaries from the West came from the following States: Ohio, 71; Indiana, 37; Illinois, 86; Michigan, 55; Wisconsin, 31; Minnesota, 30; Iowa, 39; Missouri, 12; Kansas, 23; Nebraska, 12; South Dakota, 4; North Dakota, 1; Colorado, 4; Nevada, 1; Washington, 4; Oregon, 5; California, 8.

6.—All money given for foreign missions, i. e., through the A. B. F. M. S. for entire period and through the women's societies since 1872, including donations, legacies, etc. In several years the reports show probable omissions under certain items and estimates in others. Therefore the aggregate for the 100 years could be safely stated as a round *seven million dollars*.

7.—The geographical centers were computed for the last available full year of the churches and their contributions as reported to the Associations and to the State Conventions, as given in the annuals of the Conventions for 1916. Of course, the amounts reported through associations represented a slightly different fiscal year from those of the general societies. But they give us more geographical detail which was absolutely requisite to the computation.

8.—This attests the dominant strength of New England Baptists. They were not only numerous, but their home mission activity had then planted the

churches along the Mohawk Valley which pulled the center up the Hudson and away from the strong Baptist center of Philadelphia. Peck had come out of New England and had been stimulated into missionary zeal by forces which emanated from the Massachusetts missionary activity.

9.—The items included under "total beneficence" are gifts to all benevolent objects, i. e., everything except church support. So far as financial center in the all-inclusive sense (both church support and beneficence) is concerned, a computation would probably find it in the same region as the other centers. Careful study shows that both in 1817 and 1917 the Baptist focus is generally normal; that of any category lying not very far from the membership center, as appears by references to the maps.

10.—This geographical center of giving to the Foreign Mission Society west of all other centers and so far west of the church-membership center, shows the tremendous success of the Home Mission Society in generating the spirit of unselfish service in the fields which it has developed.

11.—Sources of information available were: (a) Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Society and (b) such other societies (which were many) as were dispensing funds in home missionary activity. Gifts for one year running from early 1816 into 1817 were included. All evidences of money given for home missions, directly and indirectly, were gathered, reported gifts carefully analyzed, and consistent estimates made so as to allow for all that was given for the home missionary cause as it was in 1817.

12.—The items included under "Home Beneficence" are:

- (a) Gifts to the American Baptist Home Mission Society.
- (b) Gifts to the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society.
- (c) Gifts to the American Baptist Publication Society.
- (d) Gifts to the State Missions (inclusive of City Missions).
- (e) Gifts to the City Missions where not included in (d) above.

## THE FUTURE OF HOME MISSIONS

### THE FIELD AND THE FORCES BY STATES

☐ PROTESTANT CHURCH MEMBERS  
☒ ALL OTHERS



**"IS THIS COUNTRY CHRISTIANIZED?"**













UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA

B.P366D

C001

JOHN MASON PECK AND ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF



3 0112 025408391